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ILLUSTRATED STORIES

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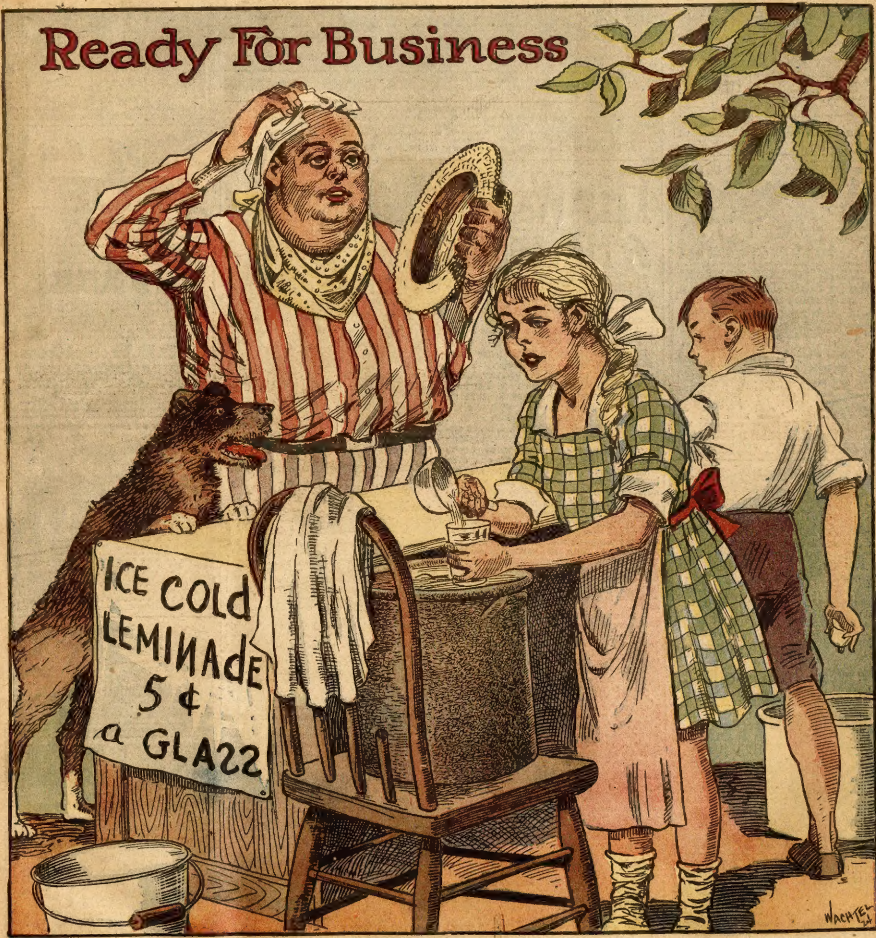

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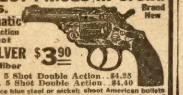

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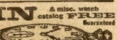

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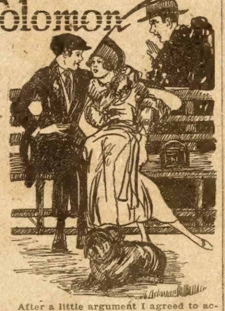
His Way With the Ladies

by Mendel M. Solomon



AMOS was mighty lucky to have ears. Without them, the top of his head would have been an island when he laughed. His mouth stretched across his map like the Milky Way in a star specked sky.

I have worked with him in the same office for nearly two weeks. Yet I haven't been arrested for murder. When I stop and consider this fact, I'm sure I was cut out for an attendant in an insane asylum or blessed with the patience of the guy mentioned in history.

In spite of all his faults, I must admit one thing about Amos. Anything he did was performed in a manner above reproach. The trouble is no one ever caught him doing anything. He ate heartily, slept soundly and was as healthy as a young Holstein en route to the stock yards. But he just naturally seemed to be born without any inclination for putting forth energy.

I never learned how he managed to hold his job until the other day. It seems that before going into business the boss was pardoned from the penitentiary by a great uncle of Amos. And as Amos was the only member of his family with the least symptom of human intelligence he was the logical one to fall heir to a position.

His duties were of a complicated nature. Each morning he tore a page from the calendar which hangs over the big gun's desk. On Saturday afternoons he wound the clock in the main office. Between times there were numerous tasks. Adjusting the shades and awnings, filling inkstands and other things too numerous to tabulate.

I once heard the boss say that if he was sure Amos would live long enough he would recommend him for a position plucking blooms from the century plant. But inasmuch as he was allotted only three score and ten, I am of the opinion that he would have made an ideal Christmas tree decorator.

ONE Monday morning Amos bounded into the office with the grace of a draft horse with the gout.

"Good morning, little dewdrop," he chirped. "I think this would be an ideal afternoon for us to decorate Highland Park with our presence. What say thou?"

Owing to the absence of paper weights and caring too much for my bare fist I squared about and looked at him.

"Plumb crazy," I ventured. "What do you think this office is? Recreation headquarters?"

Taking a few steps, which resembled the dying struggles of a calf in a hailstorm, he shook his head.

"Far be it from such. But haven't you heard the news? Our beloved employer has been called from the city. And there will be just oodles of the fair sex out this afternoon. I want to promenade in my new attire. What do you think of it?"

I didn't say. I joined the church recently and it's against the rules to indulge in profanity. The suit fitted him, to say the least. He was either melted and poured into it or secured some outside assistance. Probably a shoehorn or garden spade. Except for the fit of the coat, the general color scheme and hang of the trousers, it looked almost presentable. On second thought I remember the pants were several sizes too large. Otherwise double-breasted breeches have come into style.

After a little argument I agreed to accompany him. You see I was reared in a house adjoining the zoo and the animals didn't worry me very much.

Amos was mighty anxious to get to the park. To my disgust when we boarded the street car I remembered that we had failed to lock the office door in hurrying out.

"Never mind, Eddie," he consoled. "It's safe. I've been there nearly two weeks and haven't found anything worth taking."

We had an awful time getting to the park. The car was packed and jammed and every few minutes the conductor would ask us to "step forward, please." Seemed that in spite of paying our fare in advance we were having to walk most of the way out. But finally we unloaded at our destination.

"I hate to brag on myself, Eddie," Amos said as we strolled about. "But I must admit that I'm strong with the ladies. Did you see that little queen smile at me?"

It seemed to me that she did well to smile. I'd have laughed out loud. But in spite of my companion we managed to get along with little or no interference from the park officers. By way of explanation I might state that the asylum was only a short distance away. Frequently the patients are taken for a stroll over the grounds.

Suddenly Amos thumped me on the back in a moment of joyous ecstasy. Judging by the way he pasted me his pep was one hundred and twenty in the shade. For a moment I was tempted to yank a couple of vertebrae out of his spine. But I promised my father that I'd never strike an invalid or minor. Neither an idiot. Therefore I stayed my hand.

"Listen, concentrated essence of nothing," I warned him. "I don't mind you having a fit in public. But if you soak

(Continued on Page 21.)

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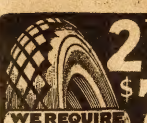

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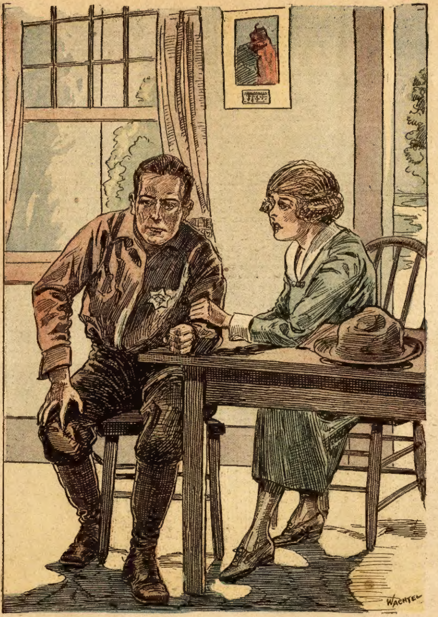
DUTY

By
Artemus Calloway

Sheriff Alf Benton Knew It Was His Duty to Arrest the Foster-Brother of His Sweetheart. It Meant A Fight — Even the Girl Knew That. She Pleaded With Alf But He Had to Do His Duty Even If He Used an Empty Gun.



"But Alf," and the girl leaned forward and placed a hand on his arm, "it would just about kill Ma if you was to git Boze by—by—that-away!"

SHERIFF ALF BENTON, his forehead corrugated by deep lines of worry, fidgeted uneasily in an uncomfortable cane-bottomed chair as he waited in what was ordinarily referred to as the "settin' room" of Dunkirk Hotel. No one had ever called the sheriff of Brunsford County a coward—nor was it likely that anyone ever would—in any event, not within his hearing, but just now his appearence was that of a man facing a duty, a hard and unpleasant duty which he would give much to be able to sidestep.

Nor did the youthful sheriff's facial expression belie his innermost emotions. He was face-to-face with the hardest task of his career and needed every molecule of his moral courage in the hour of trial.

At almost any moment now he must face his fiancee, and the sheriff desired yet dreaded, the meeting. Dreaded it because Alf Benton knew that it was his duty to arrest the girl's foster-brother, and he knew Boze Morris would never surrender without a fight. Beyond the shadow of all doubt there would be shooting. A bullet from the sheriff's automatic might end the life of the only brother Nora Clayton had ever known. The man shuddered at the thought.

Alf Benton knew that Nora Clayton and Boze Morris had played together as children. That Boze's father and mother were the only parents Nora remembered—theirs her only family ties. They had been her all since the girl's third year—until she and Alf Benton met.

Nora's father died when she was a year old; two years later the mother followed and as no one knew of any relatives the Morris's took her into their substitute for a home. It was thus that she and Boze, two years her senior, had grown up together.

True, the girl had been more or less a drudge. Her foster-father, a typical lumber camp floater, had never remained in one place long enough to accumulate anything. And finally he developed "misery in the back" and stopped work altogether. It was then that Mrs. Morris contracted with the Winding Creek Lumber Company to take charge of its Dunkirk Hotel, home of the company's unmarried employees.

With the taking over of the hotel the girl's duties increased. But few servants were kept and these were inefficient. Alf Benton swore that Nora did most of the work about the place, but the girl only smiled good-naturedly and declared that the Morris's were very kind to her and that she was only doing her duty. She owed them a great deal.

Alf Benton knew exactly how much she owed them. He had seen many such cases. A child taken into the home of ignorant people, people who know nothing themselves and see no necessity for anyone else knowing anything—made to do the work of two or three servants and expected to give great credit to the noble benefactors. The country holds many such cases, as Alf Benton knew, and he also knew that it was next to impossible for one reared under such an environment to realize that it was the Morris's who were in Nora's debt rather than the girl in theirs.

But this was not troubling the sheriff as much as was the fact that Nora regarded Boze Morris much as she would have a real brother. He was aware that the girl was not blind to Boze's shortcomings, his worthlessness, his viciousness, but nevertheless the fact remained that she called his parents "father" and "mother"—that they came up under the same roof—were, except for the matter of blood, brother and sister.

Had Boze been wanted for an ordinary offense the sheriff would have felt differently about the arrest. But this time Boze had gotten out of his usual rut. Long content with an occasional fist-fight or bullying some timid newcomer, the big, hairy chested loafer who earned livelihood by cheating the more honest sawmill laborers at poker, had killed a man. True, Boze claimed self-defense, but there were those who felt differently. No doubt, thought the sheriff, Boze knew very much differently for he had shortly thereafter left Dunkirk, a thing which made his case look very dark indeed. For six months Boze remained away and then like many others of his kind in the big timber secction had come back home.

Boze hadn't returned to the Dunkirk Hotel, but the sheriff knew where he was. Knew that at this moment Boze was at Dan's Place, an unsavory dive on the edge of the little town. Knew that Boze was even then lying in hiding in the rear room of the weather-beaten shack, waiting until night, when with the money secured from his mother he would go away—to remain away until he should again become broke. For even with Boze the cards did not always run right.

The sheriff held authority to bring Boze Morris in dead or alive, and, the sheriff knew that Boze would be a hard man to bring in alive.

Benton had come into Dunkirk quietly, coming from Glencoe—the county seat twelve miles away—in his rattletrap flivver which he parked in the woods just outside the northern limits of the town. Then, he approached the Dunkirk Hotel from the rear. He must have a talk with Nora before going after Boze, and at the same time he realized that it wouldn't do for someone to see him and warn his man. He knew also that at this hour old man Morris would either be loafing at the company store or in Winding Creek Swamp with his gun after a squirrel. All the boarders would be at work. In all probability Mrs. Morris would be taking a nap. And Benton knew that none of the servants would be around at that hour.

He had reasoned better than he knew. Even Mrs. Morris was away. Nora alone was in the house. And Benton was waiting until the girl changed from her kitchen dress. The sheriff insisted that this wasn't necessary, but Nora knew better. Benton waited.

WHEN NORA finally entered the room the sheriff sprang forward to meet her. "My, but you're pretty!" Then he stopped suddenly. The girl's questioning dark eyes caught and held him.

Nora's face was pale, her brow creased in troubled thought: "Let's sit down, Alf. You said you had somethin' important to say."

The broad-shouldered young fellow nodded. "I have. And I suppose you know what it is."

For a moment the girl said nothing. Then: "I reckon I do, Alf: You've come down to—to—"

She paused. The sheriff cleared his throat. "Yes—I've come to git Boze."

"You—you know where he is?" The girl's lips were colorless.

Benton nodded. "Yes. An' it's my duty to git him."

The girl leaned forward, hands tightly clasped. "I—I can't bear to think about it. You'll have to kill him—"

Alf Benton shook his head slowly. "Maybe not. I won't if I can help it."

Nora sighed. "There's no other way. He's determined not to be taken alive. Boze is bad, Alf—terrible bad, but I can't bear to think of you shooting him down—"

"He shot a man," countered Benton.

Nora nodded reluctantly. "Ye-e-es, I know. But Boze says it was self-defense."

The sheriff stared straight away from the girl for a quarter of a minute. Then his eyes found hers again. "You know and I know, Nora, that it wasn't self-defense. Boze proved that it wasn't when he run away."

The young woman bit her nails in her nervousness. The sheriff detected a tear in her dark eye—an eye which Benton felt was never intended for tears.

"But Alf," and the girl leaned forward and placed a hand on his arm. "It would just about kill Ma if you was to git Boze by—by—that-a-way—"

The sheriff mopped his brow with an already damp handkerchief. "There aint no way out of it, Nora. An' that's why I come here. I want you to know just how I feel. I would have sent a deputy after Boze but I didn't feel as if I'd oughter. Boze is a bad sort an' it's my own job to git him. If I was to send somebody else an' Boze was to git away I'd blame myself."

"But," the girl's tone was strained. "Can't you send a deputy? It aint too late yet. I know you got to do your duty, Alf, and I don't like to—but—Oh! can't you understand? I don't want the man I'm engaged to marry to go after Boze. I aint afraid for you, Alf. I know you can take care of yourself. But I know Boze'll be killed an' I can't bear to think of the man who's goin' to be my husband killin' him——"

Her voice broke, covering her face with her hands her body shook with convulsive sobs. Benton placed a big hand on her shoulder and attempted to soothe her, but with scant success. Finally, the outburst of weeping having accomplished more toward calming the girl than any words could have done her eyes brimming with tears, she looked up.

"You understand, don't you, Alf? Boze is just the same as my brother. Maybe I don't love him as much as I would a real brother, and maybe he's no good, but that aint the thing. We been together ever since I can remember. An' his mother has been my mother. How could I ever look her in the face again if you was to kill Boze? Telephone to Glencoe for a deputy. Then you won't be to blame for what happens. It won't be you killin' him."

Three hundred yards away a saw shrieked its progress through a fallen forest monarch. A switch engine puffed noisily about the lumber yard. A fast freight on the North & South Railroad thundered past. All this went unnoticed and unheard by the grim-faced sheriff of Brunsford County and the miserable girl before him.

"I can't do what you ask, Nora——" The sheriff's voice was so low as to be hardly audible but carried a certain finality which could not be misunderstood.

But the girl was not easily discouraged. Her voice trembled but she eyed Alf Benton bravely. "I'm askin' you, Alf, for the life of the only brother I ever had."

Alf rose to his feet. Stooping slightly he placed an arm about Nora's shoulder. "I'd do anything in the world for you, sweetheart—anything that I could. But I can't do what you want me to. You're askin' me to fall down on my job—to break my oath."

Nora Clayton sobbed. "I know it, Alf. An' I know I'm wrong in doin' it. But I can't bear to think of it. If it was anybody else in the world beside you. I don't see how I could look at you afterwards."

BENTON stared hopelessly before him. He appreciated the girl's feelings. He didn't—couldn't—blame her for her attitude. The situation was simply one with no regard for human frailties—no pity—hard, heartless.

Alf Benton groaned. "I——I——"

He paused. Like a flash of lightning, unheralded and unannounced came a thought. Gently the sheriff removed his arm from Nora's shoulder. He withdrew his automatic from its holster, slipped the cartridge clip from the weapon and without a word stepped over to a small table and placed the clip in a gaudily decorated glass vase. With a sigh he emptied the contents of his cartridge belt beside the clip.

Nora rose from her chair. Alf Benton handed her the automatic. "See—there's nothing in it."

The girl shuddered and half-dropped, half-placed the weapon on the table. "Wha-a-at——?" she stammered.

Alf Benton's words came slowly but they were clear and distinct. "I'm goin' to do everything I can for you, Nora. I'm goin' after Boze. It's my duty to do that, but I can go after him in my own way. There aint goin' to be nothin' in my gun. And then—I can't shoot him——"

There was a sudden noise outside the room, then a door slammed somewhere down the wide hall which divided the house. With every nerve tense, as noiseless as a cat, the sheriff slipped out the door and down the hall. A minute and a half later he returned. "Just one of the boarders goin' to his room. Guess he's sick or somethin'. I thought it might be——"

Nora nodded. "You thought it might be Boze. But he wouldn't come here."

She bit her lip. "Goin' after him now?"

Alf Benton nodded. "Yes. An' no matter what happens remember I done my best——"

The girl threw herself sobbingly into his arms. "Don't go—don't go!" she begged. "I can't bear it."

Gently the sheriff freed himself. "I must go. An' remember no matter what happens that I did as near like you wanted me to do as I could—that I wouldn't run no chance of killin' Boze because you feel like you do about it."

Nora dropped limply into a chair, sobbing as if her heart must break. The sheriff secured his automatic from the table, dropped it in its holster and turned toward the door. Then he stopped suddenly, wheeled, dropped beside Nora's chair, held her in his arms for one brief instant—and was gone.

BENTON left the hotel by the front door. No chance for concealment now. He simply had to move swiftly and get to Dan's Place before any one seeing him could get there first with the news.

The sheriff had nothing to fear from Dan. Alf Benton knew that Dan was guilty of many trespasses against the law, trespasses in which he was never caught red-handed, but he knew that the divekeeper would not get mixed up in a shooting affair with an officer.

The sheriff received more than one curious look as he passed down the main street of the little sawmill town. Once he heard a hawk scream and turning saw a bird circling above Winding Creek Swamp to the right of the town. The hawk's cry seemed weird and unreal, a prophecy of evil. The young officer felt his blood tingle, then pulled himself together and quickened his pace.

Benton stepped in the front door of the dive before any one there suspected his nearness. A grimy-faced, slouchy individual rose from a rickety cane-bottomed chair and slipped out the door. The sheriff might recall some unpleasant incident of the past. . . .

Dan, sadly in need of a shave, bushy-browed and narrow-eyed, looked up from a wrinkled newspaper. "I'll be ——! Sheriff, when'd you git in?"

Without a word Alf Benton walked past the table at which Dan was seated, reached the door to the room in which he knew Boze Morris was hidden, tried the knob—it gave.

Sheriff Alf Benton, automatic in hand —he was going to bluff Boze Morris if he could—threw open the door.

But Boze had heard Dan's exclamation when the sheriff entered the place. And as the door opened, Boze fired—and missed. Then—instinctively—Alf Benton pressed the trigger of his automatic —there was a flash, a sharp crack—and Boze fell forward on his face!

And the sheriff knew that the man was dead almost as soon as he struck the floor. The manner in which he fell, the long-drawn "A-a-a-ah!" and then the awful quiet. . . .

Then suddenly Alf Benton remembered. His automatic was supposed to be empty. He knew he had emptied it. Could he have reloaded . . .

SHERIFF ALF BENTON again stood in the living-room of the Dunkirk Hotel. Nora Clayton was in her chair just as he had left her. And as their eyes met Alf Benton realized that the girl knew Boze Morris was dead. And he knew that no one had been there to inform her!

But Nora knew—there was no doubt of that. Her expression. . . . The look of—was it relief. . . . .

Alf Benton thought rapidly. The supposedly empty automatic. . . . He had left it for a short while on the table . . . . Then he had left the room. . . . look of—was it relief. . . . .

With a quick stride the sheriff reached the gaudily decorated vase. The cartridge clip was not there.

He dropped on the floor beside Nora's chair and felt her arms about his neck. The sheriff of Brunsford County understood. The girl's sobs of relief told him why the automatic had fired. . . . That she couldn't send him to face death unarmed.

THE END

A Pleasant Evening

BY
RICHARD G. SWARINGEN

JARED HEARNE, earning his three dollars per night as watchman of the Hearne Hosiery Mill, sat wakefully on a box, in the pleasant yellow light coming from his lantern and the chinks about the furnace door. He had just thrown in coal to keep the boiler and himself warm. Though the mill was now operated by electricity, it was heated by steam. It was about thirty minutes until time for him to take his lantern and watchman's clock and start again on his hourly search for possible signs of fire or burglars.

It was Friday night, and Jared did not forget the added responsibility imposed by the fact that money for two weeks' payroll was in the safe in the office. But this did not make him any more alert than usual. Jared's faithful performance of his duties probably made him an object of derision among some who knew more about the mill than he, if they ever condescended to think about him at all. The property hardly seemed worth such care. To at least three men it was known that the Hearne Hosiery Mill had not paid a sign of a dividend in three years.

It was in steady operation, producing a fair grade of ladies' and children's stockings, which sold readily at market prices. Yet once every six months there would be a dolorous meeting of the stockholders: old Abner Hearne, the mill's founder and president, who still held 95 per cent of its stock; Fred Cole, the round-faced manager, who owned 3 per cent, and Allen McRae, the lanky, freckled superintendent, who held 2.

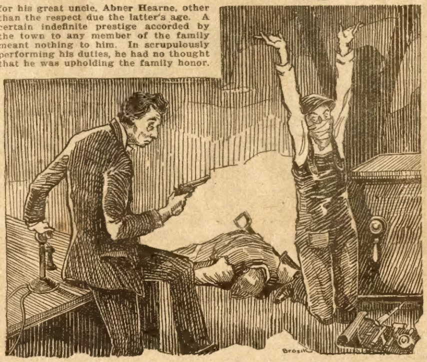
At these meetings Cole or McRae would get up and read an itemized report of the preceding six months' activities, with which all three were already familiar, and it would be disclosed that operating expenses, repairs and improvements had consumed all that the mill had earned. After that, in a few well-chosen words, the manager or superintendent would outline some of the further improvements that were essential if the mill was to continue in operation. A little later still Mr. Abner Hearne would depart for his office downtown, feeling thankful that he had not been constrained to sanction and pay a cash levy on his stock.

Every morning, walking from his home to his office for exercise, Mr. Hearne would stop for an hour at the mill and review the work of the previous day. Usually he resumed his walk with a puzzled melancholy in his faded blue eyes. He was an old man, and had many other investments clamoring for his attention. But occasionally he spared time from his preoccupation to deplore the laws that were coddling modern mill workers into inefficiency. Twelve years earlier, with fewer employes, he had been turning out considerably more work than Cole and McRae produced.

That was the kind of mill Jared Hearne guarded so carefully as to earn for him the scorn of Cole and McRae, whenever they deigned to think of him. A white elephant on old Abner Hearne's hands. Better for him if it should happen to burn down and let him collect the insurance.

But Jared, a blocky, direct man, always followed completely whatever pursuit he had on hand. He was a little over middle-size physically, and his muscles had toughened on toil. His face was square and red. There had been a time when he worked merely in order to obtain money with which to buy drink. But now he never missed a service at Sunday school, and prayed earnestly for Volstead, who had rescued him from that slavery. Tho over 30, he had never married. He had always been too deeply engrossed in some other pursuit.

Jared was not conscious of any feeling for his great uncle, Abner Hearne, other than the respect due the latter's age. A certain indefinite prestige accorded by the town to any member of the family meant nothing to him. In scrupulously performing his duties, he had no thought that he was upholding the family honor.



"Hands above your head, and get up!" he ordered, reaching for the receiver of the telephone on the desk.

He held the job, and that, according to his lights, meant that he did the work.

As he sat and watched the ruddy glow in the chinks around the furnace door, waiting for the end of the hour, Jared heard a noise behind him. Some one was moving the sliding door, which he had pulled shut to keep out the chilly night air. Turning his head, he saw a half-gallon cane-covered demijohn thrust thru the crack by a gloved hand, which put it down and quickly withdrew.

"Fine apple brandy, Jared!" called a low, hoarse voice. "Sent you by an old pal."

"To h—l with you!" shouted Jared. The tempter had left the stopper out of the demijohn, and a rich, fruity odor had already reached him, making him forget that he had quit swearing. Two years cannot efface an appetite such as Jared's; he had never smelled anything half so sweet. Every nerve in his body clamored for the stuff, and small rivulets of sweat started plowing thru the sooty grime on his face as, with stumbling haste, he reached the door and fumblingly jerked it open.

All he saw outside was darkness. All he heard was the quick pad of footsteps retreating at a run; tho a sort of frenzy, awakened by those tantalizing fumes rising to his head, half convinced him that he heard a laugh from around a corner of the building.

Jared's hands trembled as he slid the door shut. His nostrils expanding and contracting spasmodically, he stood and stared at the demijohn, as longingly as many a condemned sinner will gaze on the barred gates of Heaven. Once he stooped to pick it up; but drew his hand away quickly, grinding his teeth.

"The blasted, dirty, underhanded blackguards!" he raged under his breath. "The low-down, sneaking, filthy scum! Tryin' to get me started again ever since I quit—and still claimin' to be my friends!" Again his hand twitched downward, and again he drew it back. There was a strange, pitiful indecision on his big red face as he glanced about him helplessly.

His gaze alighted on his watchman's clock, upon the end of the box where he had been sitting, and an inarticulate exclamation escaped his lips. It lacked only five minues of being time for him to start on his rounds. Snatching the demijohn, he fairly ran to the furnace and opened its door.

But as he was about to hurl the vessel in, he was assailed by a new sensation, an elation as exhilarating as he might have derived from drinking the brandy, and yet entirely different. He felt tremendously strong, invincible in the certainty that at last he had conquered—was about to burn his enemy!

Then, because he had so recently been lashed by fear, an instinct as old as humanity whispered that he should prove his triumph, draw it out, savor its richness to the utmost. This was backed, too, by an unformulated desire to put his new-found strength to a definite test. Chuckling happily, he canted the demijohn in steady hands, pouring its gurgling contents into the fire. His spirits soared exultantly with the clear blue heat of its flame, until the front of his overall jacket, scorching, began to smoke.

He sprang away, holding the empty demijohn, and his heel caught over the handle of his heavy fireman's shovel. As he fell backward, with increasing momentum, the back of his head struck the box on which he had been sitting, jarring off his clock. It fell face up, and continued its ticking serenely. It was built to withstand rough usage. But Jared lay very still. A full thirty minutes dragged the clock's long hand half around its dial, and he lay on among the cinders. It was hard to tell whether man or liquor had finally won the fight.

At last the heavy sliding door creaked, as tho pressed by the gentlest of winds. There followed an interval of silence, with a gleaming eye peeping thru the crack. Then the door slid open slowly, and there quietly entered two men clad in soiled overalls, their faces entirely covered with black silk handkerchiefs.

"The hog couldn't resist!" chuckled one. "Once a sot, always——"

"Strong drops you put in the stuff," mumbled the other. "Won't kill him, will it?"

"Be better for the town if it did—the sniveling Sunday school angel! But he'll wake up in a few hours, all right—with a headache!"

The last speaker, wasting no time in uncertainty, strode to a tool box in a corner. Lifting the lid, he took out an electric breast drill, with its attendant cord and plug for attaching to a lamp socket. The other picked up Jared's lantern, and together they ascended two brick steps and pushed open the door leading into the main part of the mill.

JARED, awakening by slow degrees, was conscious of sensations such as he had not felt in two years—a throbbing ache at the base of his skull, pains in his eyes, and an inward nausea; physical inducements to spiritual repentance. Why, he wondered dismally, had he yielded to temptation? Above all things, why had he done so while on duty?

That thought of duty hastened his waking and stirred his memory. Why, as a matter of fact, he hadn't taken a drop, had he? No; he had—had poured the stuff into the fire! At that recollection a bit of his triumph returned, warming him and setting his sluggish blood to flowing faster. Then what—— Oh, yes, a fall. He had stumbled—must have struck something with his head. Wonder he hadn't set his clothes on fire —— Where the Sam Hill was that lantern?

Jared sat up, startled, fumbling for a match and wondering how long he had lain there neglecting his work. The chinks around the furnace door glowed with diminished brightness, indicating that the fire was sinking lower. Reaching for the shovel in the feeble light of a match, a new thought caused Jared to hastily smother the tiny flame in his hardened palm, completing the movement in silent darkness. The lantern was gone! Therefore somebody must have taken it!

Grasping the shovel like a club, Jared, with his other hand, made sure that his revolver was still in his pocket. In the midst of these hurried, stealthy movements he was thinking with growing rapidity. Friday night, and the money for two weeks' payroll in the office safe. Somebody slipping him liquor thru the door, then running away. "Prob'ly drugged, at that!" Jared whispered; and part of his chilling fright was driven out by warm thankfulness at his escape. Despite his headache, his mind was able to follow these various signs to a plain conclusion: Robbery was intended—if it had not already been accomplished!

Jared had the presence of mind to grope his way to the tool box and secure a flashlight kept there for emergencies—and to keep it dark. Still carrying the shovel, almost unconsciously, he felt his way to the door leading into the mill, pushed it open a cautious inch at a time, and silently stepped in.

At the distant end of the aisle between rows of packing cases was the door of the office, where he could see a faint light outlining the oblong of the transom overhead. The lantern, thought Jared; and moved faster, tho with no less caution. They were too smart to turn on the electric lights; no doubt had also drawn the shades of the windows opening on the street.

The door, he found at length, was not closed tight. A narrow crack permitted a thin line of light to seep out, accompanied by the strident buzzing of the electric drill cutting into the steel. Thankful for this noise, which would drown any sounds made by his own movements, he gently shoved the door with his knee, the shovel poised in one hand, his revolver in the other.

As he had expected, the window shades were drawn. The lantern, on the floor, afforded a dim but sufficient light. One man knelt beside it, the weight of his body pressing the point of the buzzing drill into the door of the big safe. The other stood a step behind him, interestedly watching operations.

The latter could not have heard a

(Continued on Page 16.)

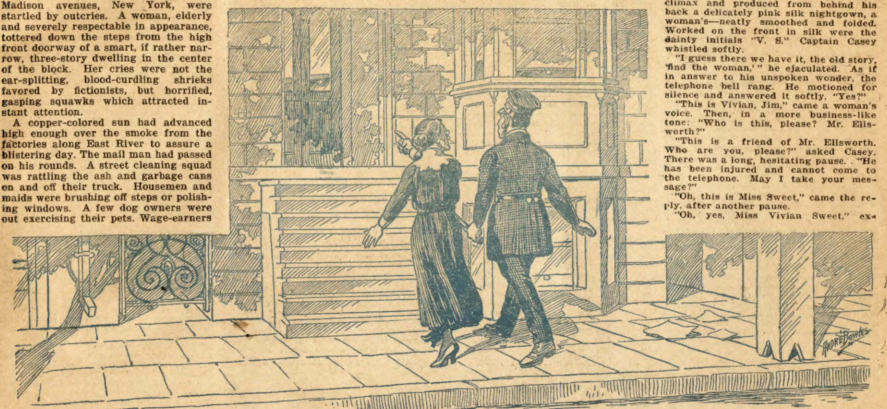
Another Story in a Great Series, Proving That Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction

VENGEANCE FROM THE HILLS

BY ALVAH MILTON KERR

ONE warm June morning the normal activities of a fairly select block in the 50's, between Park and Madison avenues, New York, were startled by outcries. A woman, elderly and severely respectable in appearance, tottered down the steps from the high front doorway of a smart, if rather narrow, three-story dwelling in the center of the block. Her cries were not the ear-splitting, blood-curdling shrieks favored by fictionists, but horrified, gasping squawks which attracted instant attention.

A copper-colored sun had advanced high enough over the smoke from the factories along East River to assure a blistering day. The mail man had passed on his rounds. A street cleaning squad was rattling the ash and garbage cans on and off their truck. Housemen and maids were brushing off steps or polishing windows. A few dog owners were out exercising their pets. Wage-earners and business people had gone earlier. It was that time of the morning so little considered as appropriate for adventure or excitement. The dozen persons visible on the block stopped all they were doing to stare after the woman who, still emitting squawks, ran as fast as she could toward the corner.



When she returned, panting beside the bluecoat, ... neighbors peering out, guessed, "Something has happened in the Ellsworth place—at last."

When she returned panting beside the bluecoat she had summoned from the avenue traffic post, and when a few minutes later an automobile brought uniformed and plain-clothes men, at the same time as an ambulance whizzed up, neighbors, peering out, guessed:

"Something has happened in the Ellsworth place—at last!"

They were right. Something had happened.

Not that the neighbors, who defied the New York code to ignore your neighbor's existence, had anything against the Ellsworth place itself. In appearance it was as good as any house in the block—an old brown stone which had been remodelled with limestone front and modernized interior. Nor was it noisy, or in any way offensively disorderly. But on many nights motorcars had brought visitors to that house and had taken them away in the small hours, and too often these visitors were women, frequently one woman. No, it was not the house itself that had made the neighbors predict that something would happen there some time, but the owner, James Ellsworth. And now he was dead.

Murdered!

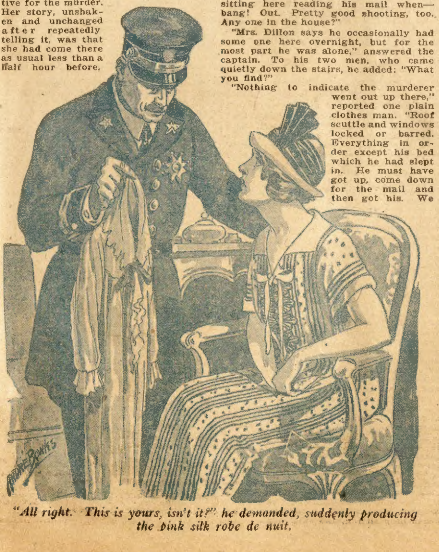
When the first policeman entered the house with Mrs. Sarah Dillon, the housekeeper, he found everything just as it had been when she let herself in for the day. Mrs. Dillon lived in a less pretentious neighborhood. She "slept home," going to the Ellsworth house every morning to clean it, make the beds and put the place in order. It was a light, easy job, and Mr. Ellsworth paid well for the work, which usually was finished by early afternoon.

Shortly before 9 o'clock that morning, the elderly housekeeper had gone there as usual, and with her key had entered, picking up the bottle of milk on the front stoop. The routine was to have breakfast waiting within half an hour. But there was to be no breakfast this day.

Pausing in the hallway at the foot of the stairs, Mrs. Dillon had looked in thru the open door to the living-room. The odor of a recently smoked cigarette hung in the still indoor air, and the still warm ashes of the weed lay in cylindrical shape in an ash-tray on a tabouret. Opened mail was scattered on the floor. Besides the tabouret was a big, comfortable overstuffed wing-chair, in which reclined James Ellsworth. Over his left eye was a bullet hole. His body was still warm. But he was quite dead. Mrs. Dillon fled, screaming.

ORDERING the shaken woman to sit down in the hall and wait, the policeman telephoned for detectives and an ambulance. Taking care not to disturb anything, he scrutinized the room. There was no sign of a weapon. Ellsworth, wearing a gorgeous flowered silk housegown over his pajamas, evidently had come down when awakened by the mailman's whistle. He had taken in the mail, lighted a cigarette and seated himself comfortably to read his letters. He had opened them, had laid his cigarette in the ash-tray and had been shot as he sat unsuspecting. The shot had come from the direction of the hallway, which he faced.

Following the arrival of the detectives, the mystery thickened. While two of them interrogated the half-hysterical Mrs. Dillon, the others searched the house. The woman could tell them nothing, absolutely nothing which would clear the case or give an accurate motive for the murder. Her story, unshaken and unchanged after repeatedly telling it, was that she had come there as usual less than a half hour before, had let herself in with the key Ellsworth had given her, and immediately, upon entering the hallway, had seen the dead man seated in the front room. Startled and in fear, she had rushed out and given the alarm without stopping to investigate.



"All right. This is yours, isn't it?" he demanded, suddenly producing the pink silk robe de nuit.

"He hasn't been dead an hour," the ambulance surgeon pronounced, closing his bag and preparing to leave. "No case here for me. Where's the gun?"

"No gun in sight, both the woman and Officer Klein say," replied Captain Casey, of the branch detective bureau. "No indication of suicide, eh, Doc?"

"None. Plain case of murder, my opinion," replied the surgeon. "No gunpowder marks on face or hands. He was sitting here reading his mail when—bang! Out. Pretty good shooting, too. Any one in the house?"

"Mrs. Dillon says he occasionally had some one here overnight, but for the most part he was alone," answered the captain. To his two men, who came quietly down the stairs, he added: "What you find?"

"Nothing to indicate the murderer went out up there," reported one plain clothes man. "Roof scuttle and windows locked or barred. Everything in order except his bed which he had slept in. He must have got up, come down for the mail and then got his. We looked into his dresser drawers and found—this."

The detective worked up his little climax and produced from behind his back a delicately pink silk nightgown, a woman's—neatly smoothed and folded. Worked on the front in silk were the dainty initials "V. S." Captain Casey whistled softly.

"I guess there we have it, the old story, 'find the woman,'" he ejaculated. As if in answer to his unspoken wonder, the telephone bell rang. He motioned for silence and answered it softly. "Yes?"

"This is Vivian, Jim," came a woman's voice. Then, in a more business-like tone: "Who is this, please? Mr. Ellsworth?"

"This is a friend of Mr. Ellsworth. Who are you, please?" asked Casey. There was a long, hesitating pause. "He has been injured and cannot come to the telephone. May I take your message?"

"Oh, this is Miss Sweet," came the reply, after another pause.

"Oh, yes, Miss Vivian Sweet," exclaimed the captain. "He wishes you would come here. He has something to give you and doesn't want to trust it to any one else. You'll come? Or where can——"

"I'll be right over in fifteen minutes," replied the woman anxiously. "Is he seriously hurt?"

"Rather," replied the captain. "This is the doctor talking."

"I'll hurry," promised Miss Sweet, and hung up.

Casey snapped around, glowing happily.

"Walking right into my arms," he exulted. "Get your bus away, Doc. And you, Dan, have that harness bull clear the crowd away, and then come inside so she won't get frightened off. When she comes, you all keep out of sight and leave her to me. Meanwhile, you two hop into the machine and scout out where Miss Vivian Sweet lives. Trail her here and then double back and find out what you can about her relations with this man. Ask her maid if one of her nighties is missing. This one."

He put the forth man to telephoning police headquarters for all information available about James Ellsworth, Vivian Sweet, and any of their intimates. He knew a little: That Ellsworth was an authority on games of chance, had written a book on how to beat roulette. He played the market, the races and various games in a coldly scientific manner based on study of his subject. He was content to win rather steadily if not sensationally, enough to finance his easy mode of life. He was a familiar figure at the race tracks and in the night life resorts of Broadway.

"SHE'S coming up!" reported Dan, peering past a lifted shade. The doorbell rang. Casey admitted a modishly gowned young woman, who glanced doubtfully at him as he closed the door behind her and waved her toward the front room. As she stepped into view of the dead man, she halted trembling and appeared about to collapse. Her hands went to her eyes to shut out the sight. Casey assisted her to a chair. Her face was drained of all color. She shuddered as she turned inquiringly to him.

"I am a police officer," he informed her. "It was necessary to get you here to help us clear up this affair, this murder. What do you know about it?"

"Nothing," she gasped in horror. "This was the first inkling I had of it! Oh, this is terrible! Why, we were out together only last night!"

"Alone?" prompted the captain, eagerly.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Miss Sweet, wringing her dainty handkerchief. "Mr. Ellsworth, who, as you may know, was quite fond of entertainment, had my sister, her husband and myself as his guests at some cabarets all evening. Between 1 and 2 o'clock we left the Gay Grotte in a taxi, which my brother-in-law, Mr. Allwyn Karb, ordered. About two blocks below here, in Madison avenue, Mr. Ellsworth asked us to put him down as he thought a few blocks walk would be good for him at bedtime. That is the last I saw of him alive. We drove away. He was in good spirits and perfectly sober at the time—to save your asking."

"You didn't spend last night here, then?" asked Casey.

"Why! certainly not!" she expostulated, indignantly. "What makes you ask? You must know Mr. Ellsworth lived here alone, not even servants. His wife obtained her separation some years ago."

"When did you stay here overnight last?" persisted Casey.

"Is it necessary to be insulted?" she asked, coldly.

"All right. This is yours, isn't it?" he demanded, suddenly producing the pink silk robe de nuit from under a paper. He laid it gently in her lap. For a long minute she stared at it, while her white face gradually became crimson. On a chance, the captain added: "Of course, Mrs. Dillon has told us. If you wish to explain——"

"This is mine," admitted the young woman in a small voice. She hesitated. Then burst out: "I might as well own up and set this right instead of letting it get worse by keeping silent. I live with my sister and her husband. About a month ago we had a little quarrel, nothing serious. It turned on my obligations to them. My feelings were hurt. We were having after-theater supper at a cabaret at the time. I left them in anger. As I was going out I met Mr. Ellsworth coming in. I wanted sympathy and told him what had happened.

"I said I wasn't going back to their home. He said he was leaving on a midnight train. For one of the Southern tracks, I think, and he offered me the use of his house for the night, or as long as I wished. We taxied to Mr. Karb's apartment, where I threw a few things into an overnight bag, and drove here. He saw me comfortably in and hurried away. After trying an hour to sleep, I became scared, realized this was a foolish and compromising thing to do. My anger had subsided. I hurriedly dressed, called a taxi and went home. My folks didn't know I'd been anything but just very late getting in, and they are used to that. Then I discovered that in my haste to get away, I had left—this. So—but that's all."

"You were going to say what you did to get it back," prompted Casey. "Of course, you didn't want Mrs. Dillon to find it."

"Early that morning, before the housekeeper was due to get here, I called up, on a hunch, to see if any one was in," she confessed. "Jim—Mr. Ellsworth—answered. He said he'd missed his train, had played bridge at one of his clubs for several hours and had come to have breakfast with me. I suppose his explanation sounds thin to you."

"In a word, yes," agreed the captain. For several hours the examination continued, until the young woman showed signs of collapsing. They had moved to the library where she would not have to look at the body. Other detectives were working in the living-room gathering details. The medical examiner, an assistant district attorney, and higher police officials swarmed the place. In the course of Miss Sweet's examination her sister and brother-in-law were ushered in. Karb was a broker and clubman, rather well-to-do. They corroborated her story of the preceding night's parting with Ellsworth.

Summed up, the only significant added information brought out was that Miss Sweet had permitted attentions from Ellsworth, knowing that he had a wife who had obtained a separation, and altho she herself was engaged to a young Venezuelan, Juan Mineros.

AT 2 o'clock that afternoon, Casey sat down to a belated luncheon with his chief, Inspector Gay, head of the detective division. Miss Sweet and the Karbs had been permitted to leave, after promising to respond any time they were called to help solve the case. Mrs. Dillon had been able to add nothing, except that she occasionally had found evidence in the house suggesting that Ellsworth had overnight visitors.

"It's the most baffling mystery I ever stacked up against," Casey confessed. "Not a motive is certain, yet all sorts of probabilities. The Karbs and Miss Sweet swear they left him three blocks from his home before 2 this morning and never saw him again alive. And we might as well believe that, because he was bumped off between 8 and 9 today. The mailman didn't get around until after 8. Ellsworth took in his mail and was reading it when he got shot. Mrs. Dillon arrived shortly before 9. He was dead or dying then. She doesn't know a thing about it, that's certain. Somebody got in without his knowing it at that time and killed him without a thing to warn Ellsworth. His face doesn't show any alarm.

"There's nothing to indicate anybody else was in the house with him last night. His wife is out of the State, has been for weeks. She got her alimony or allowance regularly thru her lawyer, and it stops with his death, so that's that. Miss Sweet's spiggotty lover has a perfect alibi for the night and morning. So that's out. You're going to ask if the girl mightn't have come to his house this morning to demand her nightie, before Mineros learned about it, or to plead for it. Ellsworth had refused to send it back. He had told her that time when she telephoned that he'd give it to her if she'd come to the house for it. That's the kind of a bird he was. A devil with the women. But she has her alibi that she never left her house until I asked her over. We can't shake it—too many people to support it."

"He had enemies?" suggested the inspector, thoughtfully.

"Plenty. But which one?" answered the captain, gloomily. "A man like Ellsworth couldn't help having enemies. They're scattered all over the country. Men he's nicked at gambling, at the track. Men he's won women away from—the kind of men who'd make a killing matter of it, too. But after we've run them all down, we'll probably find that each was miles from here this morning. Nobody saw any one go in to that house at that hour. At least, nobody that remembers. There were people passing, servants of the neighboring houses going out and in, white wings, people walking the dog, all sorts, but not one who can recall seeing any one go in there. I've had the block combed."

"The letters he was reading when he was killed?" inquired Gay. "Didn't any of them give any hint?"

"They were mostly bills, circulars, business letters and so forth. I read 'em all. Nothing there. A clean job."

"Fingerprints?"

"No fingerprints. Nothing dropped. If Ellsworth got letters from women, he destroyed them for a change, to make it harder. The telephone's a great safety device. It leaves no trace."

"Well," sighed Inspector Gay, "put out a drag net on the city, especially the cabarets. See if you can turn up some row he had there, or anywhere. Check on the names in his private address book. Question his club associates for any clews, and his race track acquaintances. From what I've learned so far, this fellow was a cold-hearted—well, never mind. What's that they say about 'of the dead say only good?' Still, I wouldn't be surprised if he had it coming to him. All I got to say is that this is one mysterious mystery."

And he spoke truly. It was, and it remained a mystery. Months passed, and the police knew no more than they did the first day.

New mysteries bobbed up to divert public attention, new sensations demanded interest, but the Ellsworth case remained the perfect mystery. A year slipped by—several years, and the veil had not been lifted. Vivian Sweet had exiled herself to the Orient to escape the notoriety which had marred her life and shattered her romance. Liars, those queer self-accusers who seek the spotlight at any cost, bobbed up and "confessed," only to be proven clumsy prevaricators or mentally light persons.

Who killed Ellsworth? Why?

The detectives never learned. Yet among certain race track followers who hold to the code that one must lose without complaining, there is a story——

A SPRING night, over a month before the summer morning that opens this story. The eastbound train out of Lexington is crowded, jammed with the throng getting away after the running of the historic Derby at Churchill Downs. Hilarity on the part of the lucky bettors, stimulated possibly by something stronger than one-half of one per cent, filled the cars. Even the losers felt the contagious exhilaration. But there was one passenger who did not share the prevailing good cheer.

In a middle section of one of the sleepers, a young woman, hardly more than a mere girl, sat alone, the picture of dejection. Her timid inexperience was proclaimed by the fact that she was riding backwards altho there was no one else in the section. Several expensive looking bags, and a man's hat and topcoat occupied the forward-facing seat, but unlike experienced travelers, she left them in their dog-in-a-manger position.

Presently a man strolled in from the smoking compartment and stopped at this section. He was a middle-aged, well-built man, whose black hair was thinning but was carefully barbered. His face was coldly calculating, his brows heavy and domineering. His chin was smooth shaven but dark in spite of the frequent razor. He was attired faultlessly in a suit which betrayed taste and repression while hinting at the sporting occasion on which they were worn.

A single glance, schooled to make instant correct estimates, he bestowed on the girl. In spite of the utter lack of style and sophistication in her costume and bearing, she was a beauty, a most lovely creature. Her lack of style only emphasized her natural beauty, her dark, luxuriant hair simply coiffed, her innocent, trustful big eyes, lips red and curving and blooming cheeks which were ignorant of chemistry.

"Wouldn't you prefer to ride forward? I'm so sorry I left these here," began the man, sweeping his belongings from the seat.

"I understood whoever had the upper had to ride backward," the girl explained shyly, as she gratefully changed. The experienced man tossed his coat and hat to the seat she had vacated and sat down beside her. His expression was calm, no attempt at overpleasant smiling, but mere understanding reassurance.

"You're welcome to the lower, I'm sure," he remarked. Her grateful acceptance and her story about her being unable to get a lower berth opened the way for easy, natural conversation. The Derby proved a subject which established mutual interest. She had gone to the racing meeting in high hopes, following her father who had taken to the classic a likely young thorobred upon which he had staked all his time and money. Their hopes had been ill-founded. Fast company had developed so many glaring faults in the animal, that the father had remained behind to try to sell it while sending his daughter on home.

Here was a girl, disappointed at the turn in the family fortunes, tired of her country life, restless with the impatience of youth. It furnished diversion that whiled away the evening to picture to her life in the big city, garish scenes, excitement, glamour. He told her that her fortune awaited her in the pictures or the chorus, with her looks. He could put her on the right track, give her the proper introductions. Poor little wild flower, she believed him. She was too young, too inexperienced to heed his suggestion that there was a price.

When, some weeks later, she crept back to her mountain home she had learned the sad lesson of trusting a strange train acquaintance. She tried to hide, but in her bitter unhappiness she poured out her wrongs to the fiery young man who had expected to make her his wife. Rural tho his home surroundings were, he had been about considerable, following the racing meets and mingling with men who knew what was going on. Belle Cleggett's story set Birchel Boone on fire for revenge, but he knew enough to proceed with caution. He had no wish to add to the girl's humiliation by giving her story the publicity an open vendetta would mean.

He made his plans, and one day slipped quietly away for New York. He arrived in the metropolis early on the summer morning of the shooting mystery. In a west side lunch room he found the friend he sought, eating breakfast after an early morning's work. They strolled out to the curb, and conversed for a while, two boyhood chums whose lives had been thrown far apart in recent years. The city dweller indicated his milk wagon and the other stepped into it and drove off across town. He made his way to one corner of the block in which stood Ellsworth's house, and there he sat, ostensibly studying his account book. It was quite customary for drivers to make a second round after the breakfast hour, to do their collecting.

His concealed point of vantage gave a view of Ellsworth's house. Presently he saw the mailman deliver there, saw the door open and Ellsworth, in dressing-gown, take in his letters. Boone drove leisurely past the place to the next door and stopped. At that moment the street was deserted. He was up the steps and had rung the bell. Ellsworth opened the door cautiously.

"Mr. Ellsworth?" inquired the stranger, courteously. "I just got in to town. Going right out. I was sent by an old Southe'n friend to give you a sure thing on the races, coming up next week. His letter."

Ellsworth took the proffered letter.

"Come in, won't you?" he invited. "Just pardon me a second until I skim thru this mail. Then we'll talk. If you haven't had breakfast, mine will be ready in a short time. Like to have you join me."

He waved the stranger to a chair and resumed scanning his mail. He was doing that when Boone, drawing in a flash from his armpit scabbard, shot the man dead. Recovering his decoy letter, Boone cautiously peered out. Once more luck favored him. The few persons in sight were not looking in his direction. Softly closing the door behind him, he stepped down to the sidewalk and into his borrowed milk wagon. Quite sedately he drove away, then hurried back to the boyhood friend who had loaned him his employer's rig without questioning. That morning Boone left the city, never to return. The vengeance of the hills had been meted out.

THE END.

The Strange Case of Southpaw Skaggs

BY ARTHUR CHAPMAN

WHEN a star baseball pitcher snaps a tendon in his salary wing he feels about as cheerful as a concert fiddler who has had his left hand massaged in the jaws of his pet bulldog, or a painter of sunsets who has gone color blind in Naples. That was what happened to me when I was travelin' my strongest in big league company. There was a strike called in my left shoulder, and all the rest of my arm went out in sympathy. I couldn't throw a ball with speed enough to bu'st through a piece of tissue paper—me, who had been celebrated for years for havin' more steam than a Mogul ingine! I was pulled out of the game, when it was seen that I couldn't do more than float the ball into the catcher's mitt as soft as snowflakes fallin' on a feather bed. My manager's face was longer 'n a Sunday School superintendent's on a stormy day when I told him my famous left wing, that had held thousands spellbound, was deader 'n Casey's cork leg.

"I'll have to give you your two weeks' notice, Bill," he said, finally. "Any high school team in the country'd have our outfielders climbin' the fences all the afternoon on the Wellesley College twirlin' you did today. I'm sorry to see you go, 'cause it costs me the championship sure. I've got a brother who hustles a truck down to the Union Depot, and maybe he can git you a job as crossin' tender."

I took off my uniform and put on my street clothes and went out into the unfeelin' world to think things over. The fans had begun to forget me already, and was talkin' about the wonderful work of a young recruit who had "saved" the game after I was took out. I gritted my teeth and walked along and said nothin', with my left arm swingin' like so much dead wood.

About a block from the ball park, a young feller named Doc Bings comes up and puts his hand on my shoulder. It sure brought the tears to my eyes, bein' the first mark of sympathy I had had, and, after I had blinked awhile, I says:

"Play that Shopang thing, Doc, 'cause I'm headed fer the boneyard. What show is there for a pitcher with a bu'sted tendon in his workin' wing?"

Doc looked serious for a minute, and then he asked me to come up to his office, where he spent most of his hours waitin' for patients that never showed up. I had knowed Doc in his medical student days, when he had played first base for his college team, which same I coached. He was a likable young fellow, and always made it his practice to have a seat on the bleachers when I was workin', and many a game I have won, simply thru the inspiration of his college yell. He looks my arm over, and then he says:

"Accordin' to all dope, you are a dead one, Bill. That south paw, with which you have dazzled the crowned heads of baseball, is now all to the past tense."

"Ain't there no show at all for me, Doc?" I asked.

"Not unless some young Rube with a whip he don't need is willin' to donate you the mainspring out of his speed machine," he says.

"In case I get some young feller who is willin' to part with a good tendon, would such an operation be possible?" says I, graspin' at a straw.

"It might be possible," says Doc, "but where are you goin' to find an altruistic brother who will be willin' to part with good whipcord in exchange for the frayed and battered muscle you'd offer in trade?"

"Hold on," I broke in. "I've got an idea, Doc, and if you and me can do a little team work maybe we can head old man Fate off at the home plate and win this here game after all. We won't need to deprive no aspirin' youngster of his sidewheel in order to put Southpaw Skaggs back into the game. I want you to splice an ostrich tendon on to this left wing of mine."

"An ostrich tendon," says Doc, so surprised his pipe fell.

"Sure," I says. "I happen to know that the ostrich has got the strongest leg muscles of any representative of the animal kingdom. When I was pitchin' in the Texas League, I worked winters helpin' on a ostrich ranch not far from El Paso. There's nothin' I don't know about them critters. Many's the time I've woke up, after one of 'em has kicked me insensible, and wished I could deliver a punch like that. When an ostrich draws up his foot and lets go, you have speed exemplified. The kick of a mule ain't in it, any more than a freight local is in it with a lightnin' express."

"I begin to see possibilities," says Doc. "Southpaw Skaggs, I hereby apologize for harborin' the suspicion, all these years, that you couldn't possibly get room for a real thought in your cranium, outside of baseball."

"Don't apologize," I says. "You just get to the grindstone and sharpen your operatin' instruments, and, when I bring an ostrich here, you be ready to remove the longest and strongest tendon in that bird's leg and hitch it to this here parted cable of mine."

And, on securin' Doc's promise, out I starts into the world to find a bargain in muscular ostriches.

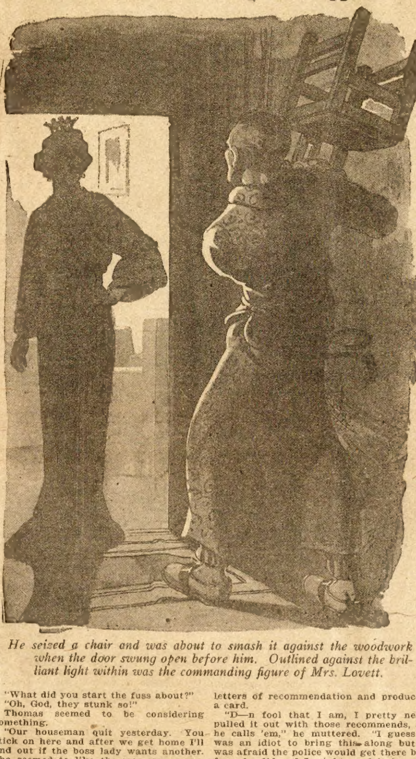
I had a long and hard search before I found what I wanted, and my early trainin' in the bush leagues, where we used to ride from town to town on the freight

(Continued on Page 18.)

FIFTY TIN CANS

BY YAWDRO TREBOR

Here Is a Detective and Mystery Story That Will Hold Your Interest From the First to the Last Line. The Final Installment Will Appear Next Week. A Rapidly Moving, Exciting Story Dealing With a Clever Gang of Smugglers.



He seized a chair and was about to smash it against the woodwork when the door swung open before him. Outlined against the brilliant light within was the commanding figure of Mrs. Lovett.

THE want ad had brought a mob. Fifty or more applicants stood before the locked door of the dingy old building. White, black, yellow, of every nationality, they chafed to answer it, for had it not said,

"Houseman wanted, experience desirable, but not necessary."

At first disorderly, something like order had finally been assumed. By common consent a line was formed, with early comers at its head and the others ranging below.

Half way or more down in the assemblage was a neat young man in dark blue livery, hedged between a negro before him and a decrepit, beared creature behind. The young man was taking particularly notice, not so much of the head of the line for a possible opening of the door, but of the street. A limousine turned the corner into this dingy thorofare. It was as if a cue had been spoken to the young man.

"My God, why don't some of you guys take a semi-yearly bath!"

The liveried one was the speaker. His remark was addressed not alone to his two unsavory neighbors. It seemed to include the entire aggregation. The superiority of words and inflection was a red rag to the unwashed males.

One of them actually deserted his favored position much farther up the line to dash wildly back and, ignoring the preliminary arguments ordinarily deemed essential to hostilities in his circle, directed a forceful blow at the temptingly firm chin of the offender.

The blow did not land. A neat duck of the target was accompanied by an upward swing not half as vicious in appearance but much more deadly in effect. The belligerent one went sprawling and in another instant the line was a forgotten incident in the lives of all present save half a dozen nearest the door.

Out of the throbbing mass of fighting humanity, which had welcomed this opportunity to express in action its violent collective mob bitterness at not having arrived here earlier, the instigator of the trouble managed cleverly to extricate himself. By the time the limousine which had seemed to be his cue for starting this melee was near, he was fighting on its outskirts nearest the street, fighting brilliantly, coolly, with conservation of strength which made every blow count.

The machine coming along the street was driving slowly, its chauffeur too intent upon this delightful spectacle of a real "scrap" to make speed. Its only occupant, an elderly, distinguished woman, sat forward on the edge of her seat, as entranced as her servant at this primitive sight of humanity in combat.

"Poor fellow, there are heavy odds against him. Pick him up if you can, Thomas," she exclaimed thru the open front window of her modern chariot.

Thomas pushed a button that gave vent to a number of electric toots which justified the mightiness of the energy germinating them. Half the fighters paused in their labors but the cause of it all merely darted one glance over his shoulder. In that glance he saw the splendid car, moving hardly faster than a man could walk, saw the front door swing open and the beckoning gesture of the chauffeur.

With one final punch at his nearest adversary, the fighting demon, his livery no longer neat and his face no longer clean, darted out to jump on the running-board of the machine, which became on the instant a pulsating purveyor of freedom as it bounced and rattled over the curb.

As the man jumped on, the gray-haired lady in the rear of the big limousine herself closed the formerly open front window of that section and sat alone in exclusive elegance. But her eyes keenly studied the badly battered face of the rescued as an occasional profile view was exposed to her.

Thomas seemed a man of few words. As he skilfully piloted the big car out of the labyrinth of cobble-stones onto the grateful smoothness of the avenue he merely commented,

"You'd a-got yours in a minute. Lucky for you the old girl's got a heart."

"She must be a good old dame," he of the damaged uniform replied.

"She is. Say when you want me to drop you."

"Which way you going?"

"Way up the drive." Thomas shot a swift glance at his unexpected passenger as he spoke.

"I'll go the whole hog, if you'll let me," the latter said. "I want to get up that way anyhow and perhaps the cops will be looking for me for that scrap down there."

"What do you want to get up that way for?" Thomas seemed of an inquiring disposition.

"More chance to get a job of any kind. I was after one down there when I pulled that scrap. Somebody advertised for a houseman."

"What did you start the fuss about?"

"Oh, God, they stunk so!"

Thomas seemed to be considering something.

"Our houseman quit yesterday. You stick on here and after we get home I'll find out if the boss lady wants another. She seemed to like the way you scrap. Got any references?"

"Surest thing you know."

The man in livery started to pull something from the pocket of his jacket.

"Wait till we get home," Thomas counseled.

Home proved to be a small stone palace, with grounds enough to set it off and with a garage that set well back from the house. As madame descended in the porte-cochere she told Thomas,

"See that the chef feeds this person. He may be hungry after his exertions."

"You made a hit with the old dame all right," Thomas commented as they drove into the garage. "Let's see them recommends you said you had."

From his jacket pocket the man produced two tattered envelopes. As carefully as tho he had been the prospective employer, Thomas scrutinized them.

"I reckon they'll do. I'll go up and break it to the cook that he's got to set out for one more and then I'll ask Mrs. Lovett if she wants a houseman. She is dead scared of robbers and the way you was putting up a fight down there is likely to make her want you. Say, who do you suppose was advertising for a houseman at a dump like that?"

"Lord only knows. I begun to think it was a phony, which is what made me so tired of standing around with all those unwashed Bolshevists."

As Thomas departed for the house the man slipped his hand back into the pocket from which he had drawn the letters of recommendation and produced a card.

"D—n fool that I am, I pretty near pulled it out with those recommends, as he calls 'em," he muttered. "I guess I was an idiot to bring this along but I was afraid the police would get there before she did and I might need it for explanations."

Thoughtfully he read the card. It was inscribed:

Wolcott Westrom

Special operative
U. S. Customs House

Just as thoughtfully he tore it into little bits that he scattered about in a rubbish barrel standing in the corner. That portion of the card which said "Special Operative, U. S. Customs House," the man thrust into his mouth and chewed thoroly before he spit it out. Again he held cogitation with himself, half in a whisper—

"So he wonders who put that ad in the paper! Isn't Thomas wise to the old girl's peculiar way of hiring a houseman, or was he just stalling to see if I was?"

II.

WESTROM found Mrs. Randall Douglas Lovett a cool, incisive woman of 55 or 56, her hair iron-gray and her disposition, as well as it could be judged from casual observation, of the same shade. She was standing when he was led in by the short-spoken Thomas, who had returned to the garage for him, and he noted she was tall, of commanding carriage. Crossing the room, she comfortably seated herself in a big leather chair, and it was several minutes before Westrom realized that he was so placed, standing before her, that the light from the windows shone full upon his face, while he must look against it to see hers.

"Thomas tells me you were seeking a situation as a houseman when we encountered you engaged in that tussle," Mrs. Lovett addressed him, after the chauffeur had departed. "Was that not a rather peculiar quarter of town in which to seek such work?"

The man drew a bit of newspaper from his pocket.

"It was, madam, as I saw the minute I got there," he replied respectfully. "But here is the ad, and I don't know much about this city; you noticed my references were from Washington?"

"Yes, I noticed." She tapped the arm of her chair absently. "Are these people, these——" she hesitated, turning to the letters of recommendation she still held in her hand, when he prompted—

"Annistons, madam."

"Yes, Annistons. Are they official people? Does Mr. Anniston occupy a Government position?"

"Oh, no, madam. He's just a Congressman, from somewhere in the Middle West, I think, ma'am."

Mrs. Lovett smiled faintly.

"You are not without humor, whether conscious or unconscious does not affect the point. I have talked to the Annistons on the long-distance wire and they recommend you highly. I am tempted to hire you, possibly because of a strange fancy for my manner of running across you."

A moment of hesitation was followed by the question, fired like a shot—

"Why were they attacking you?"

"Because——" Westrom hesitated, visibly seeking polite words, "because, ma'am, I ventured to—to say something about their — their lack of baths, madam."

This time the laugh was a hearty one.

"I dare say it was justified—what is your name? Westrom. Very well, Westrom, I think I shall take you on. You will understand that I keep a very quiet establishment, since there are only myself and two friends living here. There are only the chef and yourself and a maid for house-service; in a measure you will have to discharge the functions of a butler, altho I look after all the business of the household myself.

"Of course, I have my own maid, and then there is the chauffeur, Thomas Goldberg, to add to the list. Formerly I have had the houseman occupy a room over the garage, adjoining that of Thomas, but I shall have you inside, I think. You will find your room on the third floor, back. The two maids have the front rooms. Have Thomas take you wherever you wish to go for your things. Your wages will be one hundred dollars a month. Oh, don't thank me—I believe in being liberal with my help and expect loyalty from them."

It was on a quiet street that Westrom had the chauffeur stop while he went above to obtain the two suitcases full of belongings which he put in the machine. The act took but a moment. When he descended he found that Thomas was discussing with the landlady the price of rooms, and a certain confusion on the part of both the woman and the man told him that he had, himself, also been a subject of their short conversation. What he learned must have been satisfactory to the inquiring Thomas, for Westrom had lived in the house two weeks, coming with Washington checks on his suitcase and in livery which distinctly was made for his figure and which, equally plainly, had been well worn.

Upon his return Mrs. Lovett devoted a few minutes to instructing the man in his new duties, which included telling any callers at the door that she was out, setting the table for the cook and serving meals and generally aiding the housemaid in tidying up.

"I forgot to tell you, Westrom, that I am expecting to make a trip to my California home to remain several months," Mrs. Lovett concluded her instructions. "You've no objection to traveling, I assume. We shall go in a private car."

"That'll be gre——" the man started to exclaim, then answered precisely, "No, ma'am, I've no objections."

Again Mrs. Lovett allowed herself to smile.

"Yes, Westrom, I think that will be great," she agreed. "I'm glad you're human. It gives me a creepy feeling to have automatons around me — one never can tell what they are thinking, as one can with a creature of human emotions like you."

With that she was gone, leaving Westrom to familiarize himself with the house as he deemed most proper.

The man took his belongings up to the third-story room which had been assigned to him. It was pleasant quarters, but a careful examination from the window told him it was practically a prison. There was no overhang upon which to climb out, no window immediately beneath to which one could drop with the aid of a short rope. Quickly he recrossed the room and began a minute examination of the lock. It was an ordinary door-lock that could be turned from either side. At top and bottom on the hall side were bolts, one of them with facilities for fastening with a padlock. A sound behind him caused the man to turn his head with a jerk.

A pretty, dark girl in maid's costume had come out of one of the doors across the hall. At a glance the stooping man saw that it was deep, deep blue, beneath the midnight hair, which caused the girl's eyes to seem so flashingly black as she took in his posture. Looking at her with friendly smile, he said:

"Tell me, what's these here things for? Do they lock the houseman in?"

"Us maids is likely to, if the houseman gets fresh with us," she sharply replied, a verbal chip on her shoulder.

"Well, I reckon I'll be taking them things off right quick, because I foresee you're going to have occasion to use 'em," Westrom announced, standing up and reaching out his hand in an attempt to pat the girl on the cheek.

A slap full upon the mouth was her answer to his intended caress and before he could move she had darted to the head of the stairs, where she turned to face him angrily.

"I'll have you understand I'm a lady's maid, not a scullion," she vehemently proclaimed. "Sure, a poor working girl ain't safe nowhere else, with fresh guys like you working in every house, lest she's in her mistress' own room. I'm going there now. But next time you see me, kindly remember I'm as good as you are."

"Best I pack my things?" the man inquired.

"What'd ye mean?"

"Oh, I reckon you can get me fired, for mistaking what those saucy eyes said."

"I ain't a going to tell on ye. I can fight my own battles. Same's I heard you could."

With that she was gone, but the man uttered a satisfied chuckle. It was evident that the manner of his hiring was known to the servants.

"And Thomas said her name was Kathleen," he half murmured to himself. "All right, Kitty, you've left none of your Irish spunk on the old sod. I'm strong for you."

Westrom again sought the main floors of the house. In a manner which indicated only a commendable desire to make himself familiar with the quarters of which he was to have charge, he explored the two parlors and approached the heavy portieres which gave evidence of a room beyond. The faint, inadudible murmur of conversation came to his ears. This must be the other two members of the household to whom Mrs. Lovett had referred. He had not yet seen them, but had not, of course, explored the second story and had supposed they were in their rooms, if in the house at all.

Anxiously Westrom peered around the room in which he stood. No one was in sight, there were no wall mirrors which would reflect his actions. He crouched down until his face was but a foot or so from the floor, cautiously parted the curtains and peeped into the room beyond. It was a library, shelves of books lined it, in the fireplace at the end burned a cheery wood fire.

Before the fireplace sat two people. Only the profile of the woman could he see, a soft flabby skin surmounted by a mass of corn-tassle yellow hair, a lazy blue eye—a typical blonde who had let herself go to seed, as to looks, thru too much indolence toward exercise.

Facing her was a man, sunk down in a big chair. The servant behind the curtains could see only a black head of hair and two long, thin legs extended comfortably out toward the fire. But he saw something else, a huge mirror was placed above the mantle, a mirror wide enough to reflect every motion in the room and every movement of doors or curtains at either side. The observer quickly withdrew his eyes and gently the tiny opening melted into the texture of the goods without visible movement. But the man remained crouched where he was. It was still possible to hear a little of what was being said inside.

"I simply must make her take me along. You can persuade her to, if you will, Irving." It was the woman's voice, as complainingly strident as one would have expected from her appearance.

"You seem to think I have hypnotic powers over our elderly friend," the man replied.

"How do I know you haven't?" the laziness of the inflection took any possible subtle meaning from the words. "She does most anything you say. Please, Irving. You know I've never been to California."

"Why should I endanger my own none too sure standing with the old lady to pull your chestnuts out of the fire?" he demanded.

"Why, Irving! Why shouldn't you?"

"Why shouldn't I? Did you ever do me a favor?"

"I will next time, Irving. I promise I will. I was afraid to last time. He was such a big, husky fellow. He might have done me bodily damage if he had come down."

"This one is even huskier, I hear. Anyhow she picked him up out of a fight. I reckon she had arranged the setting herself, but she didn't look for the scrap. She hired him right off the reel when she found out he was a good fighter. Will you stand guard next time?"

"I will, Irving. I surely will."

"You'll probably get cold feet. But I'll see what I can do for you about the California trip."

There was a sound of the man stretching, as tho he had stood up and the servant hastily turned away from the portieres. Had he been the barest instant quicker he would have seen a black skirt whisk from the room as the maid of the upstairs encounter slipped away from behind a heavy chair that stood by the wall.

III

IT WAS, possibly, an hour after he had retired, really fatigued by the labors of serving an exacting dinner to Mrs. Lovett and her two guests that Westrom, by training a light sleeper, was awakened by the soft sound of some one tampering with his door. The faintest of clicks came to his ears and then all was silent again.

Absolutely still, so far as sound went, the man on the comfortable bed allowed himself a broad smile which the darkness would have hidden, even had any one been near. Soon after the library episode he carefully removed and replaced the bolts on that door. But they were not replaced with the same screws which he had extracted from them. In a workroom in the garage, which he had visited during Thomas' absence, Westrom had found smaller screws and had cut offer near the head several of those which belonged in the door.

His door opened inward and the bolts were intended to prevent a person on the inside from pulling it open. With the phony screws he had put in, it would take but a slightly harder pull than usual to open the door. But Westrom lay quietly in bed until the luminous dial of his watch told him it was nearly 2 o'clock. Then, arrayed in bathrobe over pajamas, to give credence to any story he might have to concoct concerning midnight prowlers, he exerted the needed pull on the supposedly bolted door and stepped forth into the third-story hall.

A tiny night light burned in the hallway below. All seemed quiet in the big house and the man was debating with himself the advisability of braving the passage of the dimly lit lower hall, when an actual sound, such as he had been prepared to concoct tales of, came up to him. It was a low voice which was hushed by the soft shutting of a door before he could distinguish any words. Absolute silence followed.

It was not long before the motionless figure poised at the top of the stairs began cautiously to move down them. He had waited long enough to be certain that neither of the maids on his floor had heard the opening of his door. But he had a surer means than that of knowing that they would not follow him. Something that he had overlooked in the afternoon had caught his attention in the little gleam of brightness which penetrated here from below and he had tiptoed softly to each door to make sure of what he now saw. The doors had bolts exactly like his and each of them was fastened with a padlock. That the help that remained in the house was supposed to be all locked in was apparent, for the chef slept in the garage with Thomas.

Westrom negotiated the second floor hall without incident. The lower floor was dark. The man's right hand grasped a comforting automatic in the pocket of his robe as he slowly descended. He waited for what seemed minutes, but were only seconds, in the big reception hall. The dining-room failed to reward his careful, tiptoeing search. The front parlor, likewise, was fruitless of clews as to that voice and the hurriedly shut door.

In the second parlor the searching man was rewarded with the first evidence that what he had heard had not been but the figment of an excited imagination. Beneath those same portieres at which he had listened in the afternoon a single short line of light appeared. Evidently doors behind them were closed.

Cautiously, Westrom advanced. As noiseless on his previous expedition, he pulled back the heavy curtain a mere trifle. Doors were, indeed, closed, and they were doors without visible handle on the side on which he stood. It might have been but a panel which he confronted. But for that crack of light, which the arrangement of the heavy curtain had allowed to escape and his previous knowledge of a room here he would not know of anything behind this apparent wall. More boldly, the man held back the curtain. The crack of light ran along the floor to a point where these remarkable doors joined with the paneling of the parlor. Had some one been careless in the afternoon in allowing this room to remain open? Was its existence supposed to be a secret?

Muffled sounds came thru the doors. The man put his head against the wood, close to the up-and-down panel which he saw must be the center, at first lightly, then more heavily, but the best he could hear was the low mumble of conversation, carried on continuously, in different keys which convinced him that there was more than one person in that room. No words came to the man with clearness enough that he could piece them into sentences, and, discouraged, he turned away. He had not moved from his tracks, however, when what must have been a piercing cry but came to him like a low moan, penetrated thru those thick doors.

"You shall not, you shall not! If you dare it is the end!"

The shrillness could not be that of other than of a woman. Against it was a deep muttering. A still shriller shriek arose within.

"If you dare I'll call my fighting footman. Don't come near me! Stand back, I say. Help! Help!"

As they were uttered the words became louder; whoever was thus calling for assistance must be running toward the door. Westrom tried to push open the handleless doors. He could not budge them. He put his shoulder to them. No better result followed. With a single gesture he threw back the curtain and ran to the center of the room.

"I am coming, madam, I will help you!" he fairly shouted and ran forward to throw himself against the doors. They creaked and shook, but did not give. A second time the man ran back into the room and again crashed against the doors, with no better results. He seized a chair and was about to smash it against the woodwork when the door was swung open before him. Outlined against the brilliant light was the commanding figure of Mrs. Lovett.

Coolly she demanded:

"What is the meaning of this? What are you doing here?"

Almost paralyzed with the contrast to what he expected to see, the man stood with chair still upraised as he gasped out:

"I heard you call for help. I was going to your assistance."

"Call for help? You must be crazy! I need help? From what? I am alone."

She stepped back and motioned toward the interior of the room. There certainly was no one in it. Big chairs stood about but the lighting was too brilliant for any person to be concealed behind them. There were no doors thru which others could have vanished—the entire room, except for high stained glass windows over the bookcase, and a curtain on the opposite side, was panelled.

Not even for an instant did the man's eyes halt at any one spot in his hasty glance about the room. Yet they did not overlook the fact that on the table stood a big platter now only holding a few sandwiches, and that beside it set two glasses, both nearly empty. Mrs. Lovett was speaking again, looking him full in the eyes, with a good-natured gleam in her own.

"Westrom, I'm a peculiar old woman," she said. "You must never pay any attention to sounds you hear late at night in this house, nor to false appearances that may protrude themselves upon you. How did you get out of your room?"

"Thru the door," he answered with well simulated bewilderment. "Why, something awakened me, I don't know what it could have been. I rushed over and opened my door and heard a door close somewhere down here. Then I put on my bathrobe. I didn't hear nothing after that, but I came down to see what was the matter. Just as I came in here I thought I heard you scream."

Mrs. Lovett almost laughed, so broad was her smile.

"I guess I can't be as much of a singer as I sometimes fancy myself," she said, humorously. "As I remarked, Westrom, I'm a peculiar old woman and you mustn't let me get on your nerves. I keep the servants' doors locked on the outside so they won't be disturbed by such things as bothered you tonight. Look at your door when you go back and you will see the bolts. I must have failed to fasten yours tonight. Now, run along to bed and try to get some sleep that will make you absolutely forget this."

Westrom did not straightway obey the command of his mistress. But the failure was not his fault. In the hall a figure which he had learned at dinner was Miss Aline Curtin, Mrs. Lovett's friend, waylaid him. Despite a certain prettiness which still lived in her too-plump, weak face, Miss Curtin was in her gaudy robe a more dumpy, repulsive example of beauty neglected thru laziness than she had presented in her dinner gown or in the library. The woman was shaking, whether with cold or fright was hard to say.

"Westrom, I must tell you something," she quivered out in low, cautious voice. "I was awakened by the commotion and standing here I could not help hearing madam talking to you. I must, for your own good and for the peace of my dear friend, tell you something about her. She lost her only child, a grown daughter, in an accident a few years ago, in which she was herself badly hurt. Since then she suffers from hallucinations. Sometimes, in the middle of the night, when she cannot sleep for grieving for her girl, she locks herself in the library or some other room and holds imaginary parties, trying to convince herself the daughter is still with her. She holds imaginary conversation and it really helps her, for she is all right after one of these little spells of—I suppose we must call it mild insanity. That is her only trouble—in every other way she is perfectly rational. You will understand and not bother her again, won't you?"

It was almost a plea and rang with sincerity. Stupidly, as befitted a badly rattled houseman, Westrom replied,

"Yes, ma'am, thank you, ma'am. She had me right bad scared. I'll remember. Good night, Miss."

IV.

AN EXECRABLE breakfast the following morning seemed more responsible for the air of constraint apparent at the table than any recollection of the stir of the previous night. Apparently things had gone no smoother at the garage than in the house. The cook, a Frenchman, was one long human exclamation point thruout the preparation of the meal and those called upon to eat his concoctions in the dining-room were not free from spirited remarks themselves.

"I can stand this no longer," Mrs. Lovett at length announced. "Irving, will you go with me to Chinatown this morning? I am going to find a Chinese cook, no matter what I have to pay him. They are the only satisfactory culinary help."

The man she addressed was Irving Spiers, her second house guest and the person who had so calmly accepted the accusation of the voluptuous Aline the day before in the library when told he had hypnotic power over his hostess. He was a dark, swarthy man of excessive slenderness. Long hands used constantly in talking, a short-trimmed mustache, shifty eyes, made him a typical creature of stage society-melodrama. He spoke softly, but with a constant bite of half-veiled sarcasm, at time amusing, more often irritating, even to a servant forced to listen but infrequently.

"It is always a pleasure to go to Chinatown with you, Mrs. Lovett, if for nothing else, to see you squander your money on those jim-crack curios for which you have such a fancy. This time it is to be a human curio, is it? Sampling this omelette convinces me you are not amiss in experimenting further for culinary assistance." The smugness of the words was accompanied with a grimace over a bit of the offending dish.

Mrs. Lovett smiled indulgently.

"I wouldn't keep you around, Irving, if it wasn't that you are such a sure antidote for the flattery of Aline," she remarked. "Westrom, tell Thomas to have the closed car out right after breakfast."

When the houseman delivered the message to Thomas, that worthy did not receive it with his customary taciturnity. He, also, seemed in an irrascible mood.

"Where the devil's she going now?" he demanded with a glare that intimated the bearer of the message was in some manner responsible for its content.

"To Chinatown to get a cook," Westrom imperturbably imparted.

The chauffeur stopped on his way to polish the car and his glance increased in malevolence.

"So she's only firing the frog-eater to get a Chink, is she? How'd you know?"

"I might ask how you knew she was firing the Frenchman," the house-servant returned, cuttingly.

Thomas' answer was delayed until he had reached the machine.

"I did not think she'd stand him much longer," he commented, lamely. "The set-outs I been getting was fierce."

With that he retired within himself again and Westrom returned to his house duties. It fell to his lot to convey to the excitable Gallic accupant of the kitchen the information that his services were no longer needed.

"She cannot discharge me. I have queet. I am queet now," the chef declaimed as he tore off his apron to the irreparable damage of its strings. "I will not stay. No one he can sleep. That man he come in and he go out, all ze night long. Last night he make so much noise he scare me. But I tell him. He know now what a villain he be. I tell him. I go now and tell him again. Then I leave this place—forever. She no good job."

"What time did he come in last night?" Westrom demanded, his mind on that guttural voice he had heard thru the paneling of the library.

"The middle of the night, way much after, he wake me up, he come up them stair so fast," the aggrieved chef responded as he made his way from the Lovett establishment.

Hostilities at the garage were averted by the departure of Thomas with the limousine before the arrival of the Frenchman there, and the latter made his exit from his former scene of activities without further untoward circumstance.

For an hour Westrom busied himself aiding the unemotional, unattractive house-girl, Maud, in cleaning up the lower floor, and then rushed her off to the upper story. He had his own reasons for wanting her out of the way. Kathleen evidently was occupied about her mistress' apartment upstairs—he had not seen her this morning—and the moment seemed an auspicious one to conduct certain investigations in that mysterious library, the doors of which stood invitingly open this morning.

That he would find a door behind that second curtain he had not a doubt, but still there arose in his mind the entirely plausible story told him by Miss Curtin. Accepted at its face value that story would explain many peculiar things about Mrs. Lovett; several of her eccentricities seemed to lend it credence. It might even explain why a certain customs house director was entertaining vague suspicions concerning an elderly lady, which had led him to send into her mansion in the guise of a servant one of his most expert operators.

What that detective was to find out neither he nor his chief knew; they merely wished to learn the cause of several suspicious actions which had come to their attention. Not the least of these had been the insertion of the camouflaged houseman advertisement which had led to the adroitly engineered scene by which Westrom had obtained his employment here.

But the intended minute examination of the library was not to be made now. Hardly had the cautious explorer started on it when that sense of intuition which, developed to even a fraction of its utmost possibilities, brings to the possessor a certain consciousness of eyes upon one, told him that he was watched. Idly, as tho it was in the course of his regular movement, the man edged to the parlor door and suddenly stepped around it. Kathleen, Mrs. Lovett's maid, was standing by the center table, carelessly looking at a magazine. She looked up with a startled expression.

"You are a light stepper, my dear," Westrom remarked cuttingly.

"I'm not a light stepper, and I'm not your dear," the girl replied with as near a scowl as her pretty face was capable of. "I don't hear you making much noise yourself. What you doing in that room, anyhow?"

"Sauciness becomes you well, little one," Westrom said. That the girl had been spying upon him was evident. He embarked on a bold attack. "I'm trying to find out what become of them other people in that room last night. The old lady didn't say they were't here, and that Miss Aline's story's fishy to me. If there's ghosts around this place I want to know it and get out."

"Sure, they're ghosts. You better be going."

"If you wasn't so anxious to get rid of me I would go. You don't fall for that yarn of Miss Aline's, do you? Did you ever hear it?"

"Sure, I've heard it. I don't fall for it. I know it's so." A sudden change came over her manner, it took on a vehemence. "How can you doubt it? Can't you see the trouble in the poor lady's eyes from her thoughts, ofttimes? Poor, dear thing, she's so brave in fighting it off when she's right in the head. She can't help it. Honest, I don't believe she can—it's something as has got her tight."

Westrom pondered her words. His thoughts were of that oily, smirking, yet sarcastic dark face of Spiers.

"Maybe something has got her, Kathleen," he said slowly. "I guess I better accept the yarn, too. I'll confess I was going to search that library to see if there was any way for those people I thought was in there to get out. If they was I was going to leave, 'cause I don't like no funny doings where I'm working. If they wasn't I was going to quit, anyhow, 'cause I ain't got no use for bughouses. But I reckon I better stay—the old lady's sort of took a fancy to me. Maybe she needs me, someway I don't know about."

The speech did not have the effect he expected. Its maudlin sentiment, he had hoped, would appeal to the girl's evident attachment for her mistress. Instead, his announced intention of staying only brought her back to her previous hostility.

"She's lived a long while without you; I guess she can do it a while longer. They's a few others of us in the same fix," she announced with a toss of her head.

"Kathleen, what you got against me?" the man demanded. "Why can't we be friends while we're living in the same house? I like you fine." The words were sincere. Never had the man known a girl with the natural appeal which this little Irish housemaid held for him. Her very defiance he found fascinating as she declared:

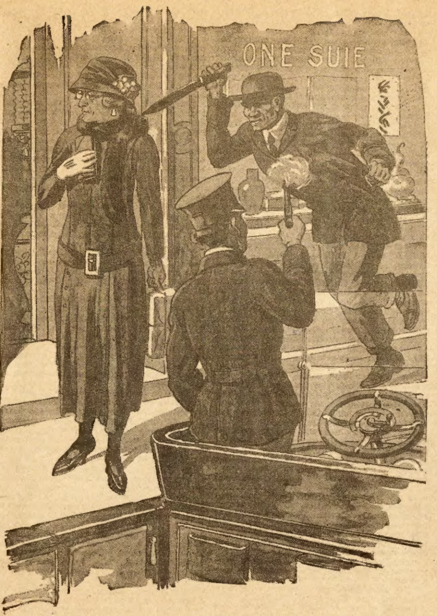
"It ain't mutual. I just don't like you, that' all. I'd like to know what you're doing in this house any——"

Her speech was cut short by the whirl of an automobile outside. Thru the door from the porte-cochere into the reception hall, before Westrom could rush to it to open it, came Mrs. Lovett. Her face was flushed, but her step was firm and her speech incisive, in contrast to the shaken appearance and ashy countenance of Irving Spiers, who kept close behind her. Thomas had whirled the big limousine away toward the garage in a mad rush. Mrs. Lovett caught sight of Kathleen trying to make her way unobtrusively up the stairs.

"Kathleen, begin packing my trunks at once," she called to the girl. "I have decided to start for California tonight. The city is getting on my nerves."

V.

THERE is a monotony about the prosperity of the eastern Middle West little likely to appeal to the effete Atlantic seaboard. Every one in Mrs. Lovett's private car, attached to a Western-bound train, was distinctly bored with the red-barn, white-house, large-field landscape. Madam herself had retired to her bedroom, a compartment which by virtue of brass bed and adjoining bath, well earned the title. The porter, who was ex-officio cook and a most atrocious one, was busy in his galley. Kathleen was dusting the observation parlor, while Aline moved uneasily about from chair to chair, wearing out a magazine by the wearisome process of folding and refolding it. Spiers was somewhere about the car. Thomas had gone to the smoker hours before. Westrom was, in the absence of his mistress, boldly treating himself to a cigarette on the observation platform.



But just as madam came out, one in American clothes—made a dive at her. He had a knife about a yard long—it looked to me.

After half an hour of smoke and cinders, the transported houseman arose with a lazy stretch, threw away his cigarette and wandered aimlessly into the car.

"I'm going up to the smoker," he told Kathleen.

Miss Curtin looked up inquiringly, but did not speak.

As he was leaving the forward door of the car, the man met his mistress' male guest entering.

"Where are you going?" Spiers demanded.

"Up to the smoker, sir." Westrom's tone was respectful, but it craved no permission for his proposed action. It was, in fact, exactly the attitude which the trained servant would adopt toward one whom he recognized as a parasite and whom he wished to inform was so recognized. Spiers bit a little harder on his cigar and passed on into the private coach without further comment. Westrom proceeded thru the door of the next coach ahead.

But it was to remain there but an instant, long enough to be sure that Spiers had gone straight into the private car, before he again dodged out into the vestibule.

In a minute he had the floor over the steps up, the door open, and was firmly grasping the rod by the doorway. The little steps which a kindly construction company has provided for roof window washers were under his feet and he scrambled to the top of the car.

Along the top of the swaying coach the man made his way, previous experience indicated in every soft, sure-footed step. At the back of the coach he performed an even more daring athletic feat. Throwing himself flat on the roof, he hung over, head downward, until he could peer under and into the observation platform and the parlor beyond it. Both were unoccupied. A moment later Westrom was on the platform, flatted out against one of its sides, that he might not be visible while he further surveyed the field of his future operations.

The noise of the train covered the opening and closing of the car door and Westrom noiselessly crossed the compartment to the built-in desk at the farther side of the little parlor. Beside it was one of the closets which car-builders, economical of room, install wherever there is a bit of space. The closet was empty—the man had removed its contents of brooms and mops earlier in the day, to the subsequent be-puzzlement of the porter. It was a close squeeze, but he managed to fit himself in. That the catch made absolutely no squeak was also due to previous precaution; it had been well oiled.

Having satisfied himself that the door could be shut, Westrom opened it again for fresh air, and waited, the personification of patience, for a development of which he felt certain. He had not long to maintain his cramped position before he was rewarded. The flutter of skirts coming into the parlor compartment made him softly close the door again. He waited two or three minutes and then ventured to open the door the merest crack. An eye glued to the opening told him that, as he had anticipated, Spiers and Miss Curtin had entered the observation compartment. their backs half to him, talking in guarded voices that were, however, entirely audible after his ears became accustomed to the rumble of the car.

"No, it's not a good subject to talk of; might get the servants excited," Spiers was saying.

"Nonsense," Miss Curtin was plainly aggravated. "Kathleen is with Mrs. Lovett and anyhow you locked the door when we came in here."

Spiers stretched his arms with the gesture of lazy content that was habitual with him.

"I'm sure glad we're out of town," he declared.

"Now, Irving Spiers, you tell me why we got out in such a rush," the more-than-plump Aline laid an appealing hand on his arm. "I'm simply dying of curiosity. I know it was something exciting—you look like you didn't sleep a wink last night."

"No more I did," he confessed, with a frank, open yawn.

"Did Mrs. Lovett have one of her funny spells?"

From his peek hole Westrom could see the half contemptuous look the man flung at his companion.

"Worse than that," was the reply. "Somebody else had a funny spell."

"Thomas?"

"Well, Thomas had a right exciting time himself. Mrs. Lovett ought to raise his wages. He saved her life."

That exclamation half of horror, half of delight, with which a certain type of the female species relieves itself came from Miss Curtin.

"You just tell me everything, Irving, and don't keep me in this suspense any longer," she demanded.

"Why?"

"Because I want to know."

"But why should I?" Again that, "What-do-I-get-out-of-it" attitude the man had shown in the overheard library conversation appeared in his voice.

"You know I do lots of things I shouldn't for you, telling you about Mrs. Lovett and keeping watch and everything."

"Fine watch you keep!" He was contemptuous. "Let that husky new houseman slip by you the other night after he was locked in and then gummed the cards by telling him the big yarn to protect me, when all the time I was fast asleep in bed."

"But I didn't know that. I thought it was you and Mrs. Lovett holding another conference, and I wanted to start the new man right."

"I think that guy would bear watching," Spiers commented, "but madam says if that's so the easiest way to watch him is to keep him with us. He acts innocent, tho."

"What happened, Irving?" she brought him back to the subject uppermost in her mind.

"Well, I might as well tell you." His delight in doing so was only half concealed. "We went to Chinatown for a new cook, as you know. The old lady went into a curio shop, One Suie, and I stayed in the car. I could see her thru the window holding a long confab with a fat Chinese who looked like the boss—she'd told me he'd got her cooks before.

"Chinks were constantly passing on the street outside and I didn't pay any attention to them, much. But just as madam came out, one in American clothes that had been standing in front of the next store, made a dive at her. He had a knife about a yard long, it looked to me.

"Thomas shot him—that's about all there is to the story. The Chinaman dropped in his tracks, the old girl jumped in the door of the limousine, which I hadn't thought to close and Thomas had neglected—careless of him to leave it open, but it was lucky. Then away we went, like the devil. I think we put in an hour going around curves. Seemed like Thomas took every corner he came to."

Thruout the short narrative Miss Curtin gave vent to the little gasps in which her soul delighted. Now she demanded,

"But why should that horrible Chinaman try to stab Mrs. Lovett?"

"I'd like to know myself." Wearied by the labor of recital the indolent Irving was seeking solace in a cigarette. He paused with the match on the way to his face while he added, "What I'd like to know better is how Thomas happened to be so ready with his revolver."

"He's devoted to Mrs.——" Interrupted at the most opportune moment for the cramped man in the tiny closet came in a pounding on the locked door into the front of the car.

It was characteristic of Spiers that he let the woman fly to open it. Kathleen was the cause of the noise, she came to say that Mrs. Lovett had a headache and wondered if Miss Curtin would be kind enough to read to her.

For twenty minutes longer Westrom was forced to maintain his position while Spiers smoked two more cigarettes thoughtfully, gazing out the window with a stare that patently had no connection with the landscape; that seemed rather to be trying to find on one of the red barns the answer to the last query he had expressed. He had not been gone from the parlor two minutes before Westrom was out and away in the manner he had come, over the top of the car.

The door by which he had reached the roof still stood open. After a reconnoissance in the method he had previously used, determining that no one would see him, the servant descended, closed the door behind him, and entered the Pullman ahead. In its deserted washroom he coolly removed the stains of his adventure.

Thomas, hogishly pre-empting an entire seat, was well ahead of the place into which Westrom settled himself a few minutes later in the smoking car. He remained there until the chauffeur, passing, roused him from an apparent nap, with the information that it was about time to eat again.

VI.

"PLEASE take this telegram out at the next station and ask that it be sent at once," Mrs. Lovett requested her man-servant. As an afterthought, with the apparent conviction that he would inevitably read the message, she added, "this porter is an even worse cook than that Frenchman was. We will need a cook in California and we might as well have the benefit of his services across the plains. These people supplied me a very good one, once before."

The dispatch was addressed to the Chinese Employment Agency, Kansas City. Obediently Westrom sent it off a few minutes later. Evidently a narrow escape from death had not swerved madam's determination to have a yellow-complexioned cook.

A fifteen-minute stop was made by the train at Kansas City, an interval which several of the members of the party, guests or servants, devoted to their own personal errands. Goldberg, the chauffeur, disappeared at top speed almost before the train stopped and he barely caught it before it pulled out. It was during his absence that a smiling Celestial, bearing the cloth bag in which his kind can pack enough effects for a trip around the world, appeared at the car.

"Me Hop Goon. Me be your cook, Missie Lovett," he announced, bowing before that worthy.

"You seem very certain of it. Are you a good cook, Hop Goon?" the woman replied in the indulgent manner of those who are accustomed to handling tempermental but highly efficient Chinese help.

"You see. Me makum you catchum fat," Hop Good confidentially assured her and without further ado to see whether or not he was hired, made his way to the car's tiny kitchen, there to engage in heated argument with the former black occupant of the place, who had distastefully witnessed this invasion from a distance and was quick to seek to prevent it. Before the impassiveness of the yellow man the nimbler wit of the black finally succumbed and the porter was reduced to the duties comprised in that term, robbed of the added majesty of cooking.

Discovery that a Chinese chef had been employed was not made by Thomas Goldberg until dinner, which he and Westrom ate together following the two tables which had supplied madam and her guests and Kathleen. The excellent meal seemed bitter to his mouth, as he glowered from beneath contracted brows at the Chinaman who served them. He hardly spoke during the meal and was at no pains to conceal that something was annoying him.

Perhaps prompted by these clouds of a coming storm, Westrom remained in his own compartment after dinner. The car was large enough and the party small enough that even to each of the servants had been allotted individual compartments. Westrom's was the first one at the head of the car, directly opposite the cook's galley. He left the door open and with the patience which seemed an ingrained characteristic of the man, awaited the developments he so confidently expected.

They were not long in coming, heralded by high words. At first indistinct, the substance of the speeches soon became known to the listening man, who now stood at the door of his compartment.

"I don't like your kind, that's all," Goldberg was declaiming fiercely. "You take my tip and beat it at the next stop, if you want to stay healthy."

"Get out, get out, me no likem," was Hop Goon's equally emphatic response.

"Do you get me, Chink? I won't stand for you or no other opium hound on this trip. I tell you, beat it, next stop. You sabe?"

"Get out, get out, me no likem," reiterated the Chinese.

"D—n you, I'll make you likem."

Tense silence followed. Westrom, curiosity overcoming caution, stepped softly along the corridor to peer in the entrance to the tiny galley, which was also ajar.

Poised as if for a spring, the bulky figure of Goldberg seemed suspended, petrified, in that position. His fists were clinched, his jaw set, but his eyes were held in fascinating focus upon some object in the hand of the Chinese cook. Likewise fascinated, Westrom's own gaze followed the glance, to the formidable butcher-knife which Hop Goon held upraised. There was no fear on the Celestial's face; it was animated with something approaching fiendish joy.

The angry, balked chauffeur's back was toward the door, but it only required one quick flash of the almond eyes for the Chinese to see who was looking in upon them. Calmly, as if merely going about duties suspended for a moment's conversation, he turned toward his culinary apparatus, saying:

"Allight, I makem you ham sandwich."

The words were like a magical signal. Goldberg straightened up, his hands dropped easily to his side. But his voice was not without a slight tremor as he said, "That's a good Chink." Nor could he control his eyes, which involuntarily sought the cause of this change of front. They did not find it. Westrom had dodged away as quietly as he came. In his own compartment, with the door locked, he was pondering on what manner of conspiracy should make even a Chinaman so ready to forget animosities for alliance in a common fear of detection at disagreement. It was a deep problem, still unsolved when the train slowed up thirty minutes later for some town.

Westrom did not stir for some little time after the train had stopped. When he did, it was not to go to the back of the car, from which the party usually climbed down to take exercise during stops for engine change, but to the front of the car, where the servants were accustomed to descend. The door was open toward an uninteresting Kansas station, dimly lighted, with gongs going to summon the unwily traveler to gastronomic horrors whose extent his Eastern stomach could not comprehend. Instead, Westrom opened the opposite door and made his way toward the back of the train on the dark side. There was no particular method or intention in his move. He was merely on a scouting expedition, for whatever it might uncover.

The trip was not without its results. On the back platform sat Mrs. Lovett. Standing before her, in an attitude of attention, was Thomas. Well down the platform, strolling arm in arm, were two figures which Westrom recognized as Spiers and Miss Curtin. Kathleen was no where in sight. The two persons on the observation platform seemed absolutely alone. That their meeting was not the casual consultation of mistress and servant was apparent when the eavesdropper approached close enough to hear their words.

"That Chink has got to go or I quit you cold," Thomas was vehemently announcing.

"My dear Thomas, you seem to have Chinamen on the brain," Mrs. Lovett reproached him. "Don't let your nerves get the better of you. This is a mere cook."

"Maybe he is, maybe he ain't. I'm none so sure. He's got to go. Do you get me? Go to!"

"He shall not!" she replied fiercely. "I will not have my comfort interfered with for a mere whim of yours."

"Is your comfort more important than your safety, old girl?" The eavesdropper almost exclaimed aloud at the impudence of the words and tone.

"Both are extremely important to me," the woman replied, without reprimand for the familiarity of the speech.

"I can't be always shooting them for you," Thomas went on. "Besides, I'm fond of my own hide. None of this life-stuff for me. How do you know this one ain't from the same tong? I do know he is."

For the first time madam was agitated.

"How do you know?" she demanded.

"That d—n snooping houseman you picked out so carefully, so's to be sure he wasn't a detective, poked his head in the door while this Chink and I was arguing about his quitting. Quick as a wink the Chink dropped the argument and went to work. Now, why'd he do that unless he was just as scared of our trouble being known as I was myself. I tell you that Chink has got to go. And after him this guy Westrom."

"Thomas, nervousness is ruining your aplomb," Mrs. Lovett told the angry man. "As to your suspicions of Westrom—possibly you are right. But I do not think the fellow is particularly acute. If he is a detective, we may count ourselves fortunate, for while he is here none other is likely to be sent and we can, I am sure, easily deceive this man. As to the Chinaman, I will get rid of him when we get to California. Until then, he stays. I like his meals."

"I'll bet he don't stay," Goldberg snapped back. "You wait and see."

The figures of the guests were approaching. They were now almost within earshot.

"Very well, madam, I think I still have time to get you the magazine," Thomas said with the utmost respect and hastily descended to run over to the station.

VII.

THO Mrs. Lovett, Aline and Spiers had been up and out on the observation platform for nearly an hour, watching the monotonous succession of sage-covered New Mexican hills, the welcome summons to breakfast which they awaited did not come. Kathleen was busying herself in her mistress' bedroom, the colored porter hovered uneasily about the quarters of which he had once, before this invasion of white and yellow help, been monarch. Thomas Goldberg had asked Mrs. Lovett when as she first appeared that morning if she would need him soon and receiving a negative answer had told her he could be found in the train's smoker, ahead. Westrom unobtrusively occupied a corner seat in the observation parlor, ready to evacuate the instant either the madam or her guests came in. But when Mrs. Lovett did come, he was detained. She had called to Kathleen as she entered but seeing the manservant said,

"Never mind, Kathleen, I'll send Westrom. Please go up to the kitchen and see what is detaining that Celestial in the preparation of our morning meal."

She seemed anxious as she sat down inside to await the man's return. He was gone some little time and when he came back his face was a poor mask to mental perturbation.

"If you please, ma'am, Hop Goon ain't there," he announced.

"Not there. What do you mean?"

"I can't find him nowhere. His belongings is all gone and their ain't even a sign that he pulled out the collapsible bed."

"Why, what does this mean?" she repeated, her own face showing genuine concern. "Did the Chinaman leave us without notice? Call the porter and see what he knows."

Before the cross-examination of the colored worthy was completed he had faded out to something approaching a dull yellow in shade. But he had convinced Mrs. Lovett and Westrom, who was for the most part a silent spectator, that if he knew anything of the mysterious departure of the Chinaman, he did not propose to let it pass his now almost white lips.

"Go find Thomas," Mrs. Lovett instructed Westrom as she dismissed the wilted negro. Her jaws were set firmly and her still handsome eyes contracted in an expression of determined, smoldering anger which made her a much more formidable person than the usually too-good-natured mistress.

To Westrom, however, was denied the opportunity that had been his in listening to the previous examination, for when Thomas, wearing an air of defiance that was plainly understandable to the houseman, enlightened by the overheard threats of the night before, appeared, Mrs. Lovett led him into her private compartment, first instructing the still badly frightened porter to return to his culinary duties. The lock of her door snapped with a finality which was plainly audible on the outside.

The man turned away, leaving Kathleen, who had just been banished from the bedroom compartment, as the only occupant of the observation parlor and made his way forward toward his own berth. But he did not even deign to halt there as a movement of camouflage, hurrying on thru to the vestibule.

It was occupied by a flirting man and maid from the Pullman ahead, who showed no intention of vacating. Balked here of any intention to climb to the roof in an effort to reach the overhead ventilator of Mrs. Lovett's inquisitorial chamber, Westrom hurried on forward to the next vestibule, only to find in it two gossiping porters. Beyond that he dared not attempt opening a door to reach the roof, there were too many persons passing back and forth. Disappointed, he retraced his steps to the private car.

Having done little but eavesdrop ever since he obtained his access to the Lovett menage, Westrom was more than ever

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intent upon applying the same so far satisfactory methods at this apparent moment of climax. But the luck of coincidence which had so far favored him so singularly had now forsaken him. It was with but the slightest hope of finding himself able to hear anything that he made his way on tiptoe along the narrow corridor to the corner of the observatory parlor, where the party usually had its meals. If the place were unoccupied he intended to post himself close to madam's door, risking detection from the couple outside on the observatory platform.

Cautiously, the man poked his head around the corridor corner, to push it almost into the face of the piquant Kathleen. The girl was standing close by the closed door, her ear glued to its opening. Astonished eyes greeted astonished eyes. Those of the girl began to flash defiance.

Lightly, she sprang away from her compromising position, while she turned a flushed face at him and fairly hissed,

"Snooper!"

For answer the man rubbed one forefinger across the other in the shaming gesture of childhood.

"The pot calling the kettle black," he whispered at her.

Turning from him, the girl busied herself about the little parlor for a few minutes, finally settling herself in one of the chairs. Boldly Westrom, who had watched her with searhing eyes, seated himself next her and in a voice little above a whisper demanded,

"Why were you listening at that door?"

"Why were you getting ready to?" she flashed back.

"I want to find out if he killed that cook. I'll bet he did, I heard 'em fussing last night."

A little of the clarity vanished from the girl's eyes. She seemed disarmed and it was a minute before she replied,

"I knew you saw 'em, because I saw you."

"Why were you trying to hear them?" he asked again.

"Because I wanted to know, too. There is something funny going on around here," she looked at him accusingly. "Don't for a minute think you been getting by me. I saw you sneaking along beside the car last night. I saw you snooping in the house, before we left New York. Who are you, anyhow?"

"I'm Westrom—Wolcott Westrom, houseman."

"Well, Wolly, what's the idea in spying on my mistress. I think you and this Thomas are in cahoots to do something dirty to her. She's a mighty fine lady and if you're trying anything of the sort, you got to do it over my dead body. Get me?"

A fumbling at madam's door forecasted its opening. Springing guiltily to her feet, Kathleen was gone up the passage before it was opened and Mrs. Lovett appeared, her face far from clear, followed by the lowering Thomas. From all outward indication their colloquy had failed to produce harmony.

The strained relations continued for the two days which were consumed in completing the trip to California. Not once did Mrs. Lovett send for Thomas, formerly her mainstay in any annoyances. Her former easy-going attitude was replaced by a carpingly critical one, chiefly vented upon the unlucky porter and his far from successful culinary attempts.

Spiers and Miss Curtin were quick to note the difference in their patroness and, from their ingratiating actions, each seemed to feel that there was something personal in it. Kathleen put in most of her time in her mistress' own compartment and Westrom was chiefly occupied in trying to draw her into further discussions, always fruitlessly. It was a party with sadly frayed nerves, from chief member to humblest servant, which descended from the private car at Pasadena, habitat of millionaires.

VIII.

IT WAS a dusty, close mansion to which the Lovett private car party was driven in hired automobiles for which it had wired ahead. That this beautiful, white cement house in the midst of its lovely lawns and gardens had not been opened and thoroly prepared for a woman who could afford to keep it up and hire private cars, was a new puzzle for the man who called himself a house-servant. So busy was he, however, with the actual duties pertaining to that station, in bossing a group of imported house-cleaners, that he had no opportunity to study over this apparent inconsistency.

Once established in Mrs. Lovett's California home, however, life moved along with a reposeful smoothness likely to make the most ambitious of masquerading detectives forget his mission in life. A deeper problem than any presented by the whimsical gray-haired mistress now confronted Westrom. He found himself becoming genuinely attached to the lady's maid; that fierceness with which Kathleen had announced herself as a defender of Mrs. Lovett had struck sparks in Westrom's susceptible heart. She might be but a serving maid, yet she harbored in her bosom emotions of affection apparently deeper than usually felt in higher walks of life.

Just as the moment when Westrom found this secondary interest in life intruding upon his primary one, he became conscious of a growing companionship between Thomas and Kathleen. It was most disconcerting to see them hobnobbing together on the back lawn, while madam was enjoying her nap. Could it be that Thomas, aware that he did not stand as high in his employer's estimation as formerly, was seeking to regain lost prestige thru the girl, who was undeniably a prime favorite with Mrs. Lovett?

Moreover, an inclination which Mrs. Lovett was developing to take her maid with her on the daily auto rides over smooth California boulevards, which had become her only amusement, gave the chauffeur unlimited opportunities. Westrom was not the only person who resented the development. Aline and Spiers were openly glum. They had not come to California merely to loll about a house, no matter how beautiful a one, he heard them telling each other.

Possibly it was a half formulated suspicion of the genuineness of the sudden friendship of Kathleen and Thomas which made Westrom shake off the indolence of the climate and devote himself more assiduously than ever to his particular powers of observation. He found little to excite his suspicions in the three tranquil days which followed the party's arrival, however. His room on the third floor of this house was the only one there and no locks about the door were apparent. With the perversity which many sleuths adopt, always endeavoring to avoid the obvious, Westrom because of the very absence of locks, confined himself strictly to his room the first two nights in the new house.

The third found him abroad, in pajamas and bathrobe, barefooted, his hand, as before when in this costume, clasping a gun concealed in a pocket. A single flash of brillance on the grass, as he peered down from his window, far into the night, had told him that a light had been lit in one of the downstairs rooms before the curtain was pulled. He was about to ascertain if Mrs. Lovett was suffering from another of her reputed spells of hallucination.

But on this occasion, tho voices were plainly audible thru the closed door of one of the rooms, and tho upon one occasion that of a man took on a threatening tone, Westrom made no attempt at heroics. For his ear had recognized each of the three voices which proceeded from the room, tho he could distinguish little that was said. They were those of Mrs. Lovett, Kathleen and Thomas Goldberg.

Westrom had been sent to Mrs. Lovett on a mission he understood but little. His chief, a person of sudden inspirations which he termed "hunches" had become convinced that there was something "phoney" about a Mrs. Lovett who lived on Riverside drive and who traveled much, making several trips a year to Europe, Canada and Mexico. Westrom had been injected into the household to ascertain whether there was actual basis for such a suspicion as the chief said he entertained because the "woman declares too much stuff."

So far as his observations had gone he was convinced that far from being a suspicious character, Mrs. Lovett was the victim of conflicting sets of exploiters. One of them, plainly, was associated in some sinister way with certain Chinese. Another, deadly antagonistic to these Chinese, seemed to include Goldberg as its head. Where Irving Spiers and Aline Curtin fitted in, the man's mind could not decide.

As for Kathleen, he had until his discovery of her presence at this midnight meeting, concluded that she was simply a sincere creature thoroly attached to her mistress and trying to thwart both these clicks. Indeed this conclusion was strengthened in the detective's mind by his discovery of the night; he felt more than ever certain that Kathleen was making up to Thomas in an effort to protect Mrs. Lovett.

To make sure of his identification of the voices, Westrom remained hidden in a room adjoining that of the secret conference, until after the three participants left it for their respective bedrooms. So late did the vigil keep him that he was late downstairs in the morning. What he found there when he did appear to rush breakfast onto the table was the greatest surprise in his tangled enigma.

The missing Chinaman, Hop Goon, looking out of only one eye, his none-too-handsome face badly scratched and walking with a limp, was officiating in the big white kitchen. In the dining-room a peace such as had not reigned for days, made itself felt. Mrs. Lovett fairly beamed upon her guests and they, for the first time since their arrival, responded to her good humor.

At the servants' table, where all the Caucasians employed by the now considerable menage ate together, an entirely opposite atmosphere enveloped the breakfasters, who were taking their cue from the morose Thomas. The chauffeur had not even a pleasant word for the freshly attractive Kathleen. Silence and frown enveloped him.

Upon the first opportunity he demanded fiercely of Westrom,

"How'd that Chink find us? Did you tell him our address?"

"No, I didn't know it myself," the man responded honestly enough.

"That's right. Kathleen says she didn't either. Wonder if the old woman did, herself?" Then, seeming to appreciate that some explanation of his attitude was called for, he went on,

"I just can't stand a Chink, they give me a creepy feeling. This Hop Goon got fresh with me on the way out and I threw him off the train. Now, I'd like to know how he managed to bob up here. Must a had some paper money sewed in his clothes, because I searched him careful first. I'd like to know what all——"

Suddenly recollecting to whom he was talking, the chauffeur ceased abruptly and went stamping out of the house in high dudgeon.

"How did you get hurt, Hop Goon?" Westrom asked as he went back thru the kitchen.

"Me fallem off tlain," the almond-eyed liar replied glibly.

Westrom had a new cause for perplexity. Why should the injured person in this affair of violence be the one who wanted to keep the secret? Mrs. Lovett put an end to his conjectures by sending him to telephone Thomas that she was going on a several-day trip to San Diego. She instructed Westrom to carry down her bags, as well as those of Aline and Spiers. The trip seemed to have been hastily planned, but whatever surprise the two guests felt was wiped out by their delight at being at last included in one of Mrs. Lovett's excursions.

The party had been gone less than five minutes when Mrs. Lovett's houseman, left behind with instructions to see that the hastily performed housecleaning was repeated by the servants, was himself speeding along the roads south to San Diego on a motorcycle.

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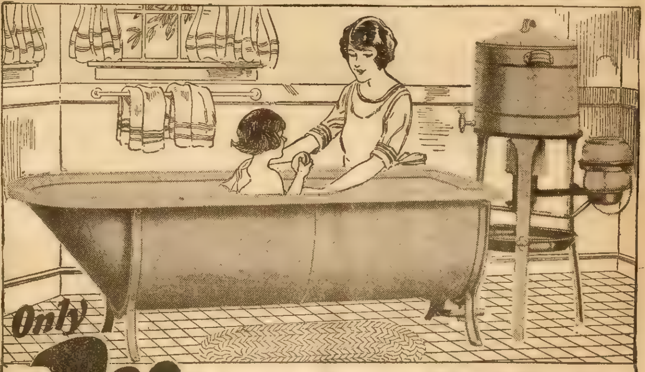

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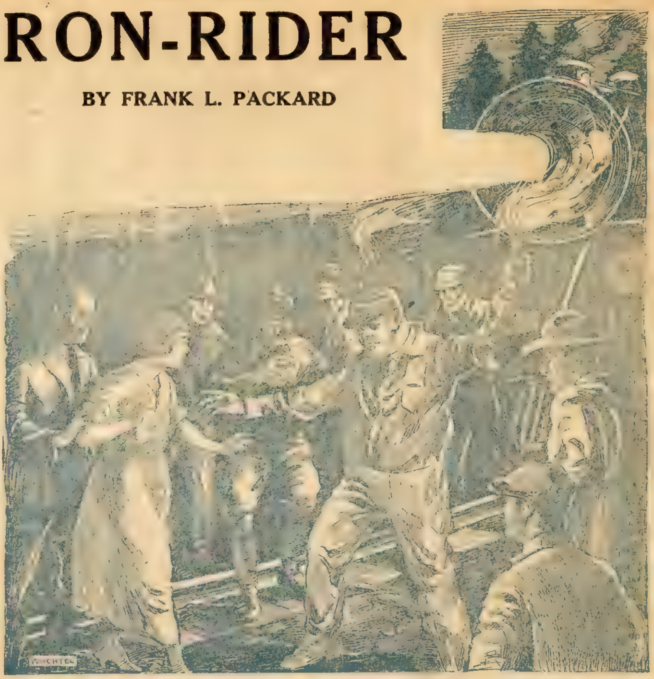


"The surest thing, you know, miss!" came a voice instantly.

"You bet you pass!" It was Peasley, the engineer, and his torch lunged forward, clearing the way for her.

Summary of Last Week's Chapters.

But Larry beat off the train crew and, seizing the engine, passed thru several stations. Afterward he sought refuge at a lonely station in the private car of

MR. PELENOFF, a visiting Russian railway official. He was concealed in a stateroom by

MERA PELENOFF, Russian's daughter, who believed his story that he had killed a man in self-defense.

Mera Pelenoff sat with her back to the door while her father and

FELTON, the road superintendent, conversed about the crime When she heard that not murder, but assault and robbery was the charge, she scornfully ordered him to be gone. Larry later overpowered the telegraph operator at the station, and learned by wire that Mason was not dead. As he was about to leap the next freight train he saw in one of the cars the face of Masseno, who was fleeing from arrest.

Larry at once boarded another car, and saw Masseno and his desperate crew, seven in number, leap off to attack Pelenoff's private car.

Larry followed the crew of Italians. There was a conflict, the Italians were routed, and Larry was wounded. Mera helped him escape on a hand-car, dressed his wound, and took a dangerous ride with him down the mountain. Then it was that Larry was at last cheered by the appearance of

BEN WILSON, an old friend.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OLD FRIEND APPEARS.

IT WAS Ben Wilson, one of the ranchers from Bald Valley. Ben Wilson, a friend—that he had known all his life! Why hadn't he recognized that gruff, blunt, blessed growl of a voice before?

"Ben," he shouted, "it's Larry—Larry Lannigan!"

There was a rush—like a bull charging through a thicket—and then a bearded face was thrust close to his.

"Eternally and everlastingly d——d I'll be!" came the profane explosion. "For God's sake, what's wrong, Larry? Who handed you this? Somebody stuck you up? A payroll job—eh?"

"Yes," said Larry, and smiled faintly. "Some one lifted three thousand dollars from the safe at Angel tonight—and they've put it on to me."

"What!" It came in a belligerent roar from the rancher. "Who says you did?"

"Everybody," said Larry. "And on the evidence they've got me cold, Ben. There's a special with a posse out after me—it'll be along now in a minute."

"It'll be along just a minute too late, then!" announced the rancher gruffly.

It was Mera who spoke—her hand laid anxiously on the rancher's sleeve.

"Then—then you will help him?"

"Help him!" Wilson stared at her, and gulped in angry astonishment. "Excuse me for sayin' it in the presence of a lady, not havin' seen much of their society in late years, but you've sure got a h—l of a nerve, young woman, to ask me that! What d'ye think I'd do! Eh? He could have stolen the whole bloomin' Rocky Mountains and walked off with 'em for all of me! D—n it—he's Larry Lannigan, ain't he? That's enough! You go ahead and keep the branches out of his face, while I carry him to the buckboard."

Mera gasped a little—and then laughed softly in happy relief.

"Then hurry!" she urged, pressing his arm gratefully again. "Listen—there's the train now!"

The rancher stooped hastily down over Larry.

"Up you come, son!" he cried—and lifting Larry in his arms, followed Mera out to the road.

Mera took off her wrap and threw it around Larry, as the rancher placed him on the buckboard. Her face bent close to his, her hair brushed his cheek.

"It's not good-by," she whispered. "I'm going to help you—back there at Angel. I—I don't know how—but I will, and——"

"Hop on there, Miss!" broke in the rancher sharply. "I figure we've got to move smart."

"Go on, then," she said. "I'm not going with you."

"You ain't?" he ejaculated in amazement. "Then what——"

"I'm going to signal the train—it will take me back."

"Eh! Is that right, Larry?" demanded Wilson, in a sort of stuned bewilderment.

As tho to prompt his reply, Mera's hand closed over Larry's reassuringly.

"Yes; it's the only way," Larry said, in a low tone.

"Then we'll wait and see that she makes it all right," said Wilson.

"No, no! No, you won't!" Mera cried. "There's no telling what they'll do, what they'll suspect when they stop and find me. You must be as far away as possible by then."

"Well, say!" protested the rancher bluntly. "Say, I don't like it! That's the limit of a way to treat a lady!"

"It's the only way to treat a lady—under these circumstances," she answered quaintly—and with a last quick pressure of her hand over Larry's, turned and ran toward the track.

The train was coming.

"Lord!" muttered the rancher helplessly, as he picked up the reins and whipped his horse into a gallop. "What's the answer, Larry?"

Larry did not reply. He was trying to look back, striving to fix his eyes on the spot where she had disappeared. Strange things had come to him that night. There had been struggle and dismay and death and danger, but out of them had come a stranger thing than all the rest, a glad thing, and yet a cruel thing—as cruel as a cup lifted to the lips of a man athirst to death that was swept away again before he could drain it. "Loyal and brave and wonderful and true!" There had come love to him that night.

JUST inside the fringe of bushes that hid her from the road Mera paused to watch the buckboard out of sight. She heard the clatter of the horse's hoofs die away in the distance; she heard the rumble of the approaching train grow louder.

The stimulus due to the excitement of what she had just passed thru was gone now, and for the first time she was conscious of uneasiness and dread. Even the physical act of going and standing on the track to face the oncoming train seemed to appal her now. She had made a very brave show before Larry, and that gruff, uncouth, big-hearted rancher; but she was utterly alone now, and the realization of her position began to oppress her. What was she to say to these officers of the law who would be on the train? Tell them that Larry had put her off the hand-car at that spot, and had gone on himself? Lie to them?

The little form drew suddenly erect, and the small fists clinched. The thought brought sharp psychological reaction, as tho the gage to combat sounded a dominant, responsive chord within her, sweeping away the momentary oppression that had crept upon her—and, turning, she ran thru the bushes and on up the low embankment until she reached the track.

With a deafening roar the train now assailed her ears, tho there was still no sign of it. It was the curve, of course, that hid it a little way farther back. She remembered that she had held her breath, fearing every moment that they would upset when she had come around that curve on the hand-car.

Lie to them! No, she would not lie to them! Why should she? They would question her, of course—and she would refuse to answer, whatever the consequences. That was all. If she could only enlist her afther's sympathy and cooperation, or, if not that, induce him in some way to return to Angel! She must get to Angel. She had given her promise that she would. What she would do there, what she could do there, she did not know—only that it was at Angel that there lay any hope of success.

His story was running thru her mind again—all the little incidents of his life on the railroad, his splendid grasp of every detail of his chosen profession, that he had so ingenuously, so unconsciously opened to her view in the dozen little intimate glimpses of himself that he had given her. And now it was all to be wrecked, ruined; a brave, clean man, headstrong perhaps, to suffer for another's crime—even if he lived!

How fast the thoughts came! How they crowded upon her! How her heartbeat quickened without reason! What did it mean? Why was this thing, the establishment of his innocence, so paramount to her now?

If he lived! Why that quick intake of her breath—that sudden cold clutch of fear? Yes, he must live now, he would live; it was only care and nourishment that he required, and he would have that. A wound like that if—what did they call it?—septic?—yes, that was it!—if no septic condition set in, would heal very quickly, but—but——

She cried out suddenly aloud. The headlight's ray, sweeping around the curve, immersed her in a dazzling blaze of light.

CHAPTER XVII.

MERA DEFIES THE SHERIFF.

THE engine seemed right upon her, within a few feet of where she stood, altho it was very many yards away.

She began to wave her arms frantically. Nearer it came—nearer. It rushed toward her so insidiously, so remorselessly, so reckless, callous and unheeding of her presence, that it seemed ready to sweep her with brutal indifference from its path. Impulse urged her to jump from the track; will power bade her stand her ground, told her that her fears were baseless, that there was always time to leap away if it did not stop.

And yet—and yet—it still came on. Did they not see her? Surely they could not help but see her! She was standing there in the full glare of light.

She continued to wave her arms mechanically, almost fascinated now by that gleaming shaft of light that shut out all but itself—a light she could not pierce, that seemed to veil even its own distance from her—and then, sharp thru the mountains, screech of brakes and scream of whistle echoed in a terrifying medley of noise.

Her arms dropped to her sides. The engine stopped a few feet away from her—and on the instant, it seemed, a dozen men were running toward her.

Felton's voice reached her.

"It's Miss Pelenoff, all right. One of you tell her father—quick!"

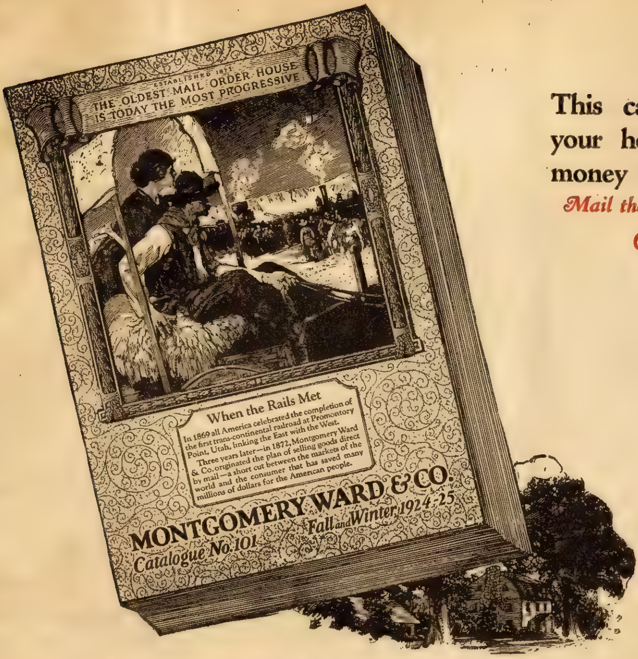
"My father!" she cried out. "He's not here, is he?"

Felton forced his way thru the group of men.

"Yes," he answered a little shortly, "and he's half mad with anxiety about you. When we found you had gone, he insisted that his car be brought along. I—we did not know what to expect." Then, conscious evidently of his bruskness, he spoke a little more graciously: "You are all right, Miss Pelenoff? Not hurt? Quite safe?"

"Quite—thank you," she responded coolly.

She was quite herself again. She surveyed the crowd of men berore her in a sort of impersonal way at first. There were a great many of them—and, their faces in shadow, the headlight playing above them, over their heads, there was something fantastic in the scene. And then suddenly she knew aversion and even contempt for them. It was a pity there were not a few more of them—there was only one man's brains and strength and courage pitted against them all! A big man in overalls, carry-



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Chicago Kansas City St. Paul Portland, Ore. Oakland, Cal. Ft. Worth ing a flaming torch, joined the half-circle in front of her, and in the torchlight a dozen pairs of eyes stared at her with curious insistence. The color flushed her cheeks.

"If you will be good enough to ask these men to let me pass, Mr. Felton," she said icily, "I will go to my father at once."

"Just a minute, miss"—a tall, dark-eyed, sharp-featured man of middle-age stepped up to her. "We're looking for that scoundrel who carried you off on the hand-car from back there at Passnock. I don't want to keep you an unnecessary moment from your father, who, as Mr. Felton there has said, is beside himself with anxiety; but every minute, if the fellow is around here, is valuable, and I am sure you can help us."

Mera, her way blocked, looked the other up and down, a quick resentment in her eyes.

"I was not 'carried off' by any one," she answered coldly. "I went of my own accord, as I preferred the hand-car to being murdered by those ruffians who attacked us."

"Well, we won't argue that," returned the other. "It's the man who was on the hand-car with you that interests us. He's wounded, I understand. Was this as far as he could get? Did he have to stop here, which accounts for you being here? Or did you get away from him? Or did he let you off, and go on himself?"

"I am afraid you will have to ask some one else."

"Some one else? What do you mean?"

"That I decline to answer," said Mera shortly.

"But, look here!"—the words came in a roar of half-angry, half-amazed expostulation. "I'm Sheriff Laing. You don't understand——"

"So I have been informed before this evening," she interrupted rather caustically.

"But this won't do, young lady!" snapped the sheriff. "I want to know what became of that man!"

"And I decline to answer," she replied again. "Let me pass, please."

He stepped squarely in front of her, and caught her arm none too gently.

"Is that man here?" he demanded angrily.

She flung his hand away fiercely, as she threw back her head.

"Don't you dare to touch me!" she flashed out. "You've had my answer. It's the only one you'll ever get. Now, stand aside, and—father!"

The big Russian had burst thru the crowd and caught her in his arms. He was holding her close to him, patting her head that he had drawn down upon his shoulder, kissing her.

"Mera! Mera—you're safe!" he cried brokenly. "Thank God—thank God!"

"Yes, I'm safe, dear. I'm all right, only—only take me back to the car now, father," she pleaded.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Pelenoff," Sheriff Laing interposed; "but, for some reason or other, your daughter refuses to answer any questions, or to furnish any information that, on the face of it, she must possess. I don't need to tell you how important it is to know whether Lannigan is hanging around here or has gone on farther."

"Why, Mera," protested her father gently, "surely you——"

"I won't!" She disengaged herself from her father's arms. "I won't!" she cried passionately, and advanced toward the line of men that spread across the track. "What would you do — what would any of you do, you men—if he had saved your life!" She reached out her arms imploringly "He saved mine. Will you let me pass, please?"

"The surest thing you know, miss!" came a voice instantly. "You bet you pass!" It was Peasley, the engineer, and his torch lunged forward, clearing a way for her. "Get out of the road there, you! I got a little account to settle with Lannigan myself, but you don't get him thru her—not by a d—d sight—not after that! You're a brave little kid, miss, excusing the familiarity—go ahead!"

She threw the engineer a grateful glance; and, the way cleared for her, she ran, a little blindly, along the track-side past the engine and toward the cars.

Sheriff Laing's voice snarled out angrily behind her in a curt vicious command:

"Spread out there, men, and hunt around. If he got off here, the hand-car can't be very far away—otherwise he's gone on. Look lively, now!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

FOREWARNED

IT WAS only the length of the passenger coach that she had to go before reaching the private car. She heard her father following her, calling to her, as she climbed aboard. But she did not stop. It seemed as tho everything, the terror, the peril, the physical strain of the whole night, were massing upon her all at once—that she could scream out. It was only relief, of course—only that it was all over. But her nerves were all unstrung, and she was bodily weary, very tired, worn out. She groped her way into her stateroom, subconsciously noticing that the lock on her door was smashed, and, flinging herself upon the bed, burst into an overwrought, nervous flood of tears.

Her father entered close behind her, switching on the light.

"Mera!" he cried in alarm. "Mera—my child! What is it? You—you mustn't do that!"

She shook her head.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, and put his arms around her.

"You mustn't give way, my little girl," he soothed her, smiling tremulously. "You'll have me crying myself. I did not know what to think—what to fear. We heard the shots out there, just as the special pulled in; but we thought it was only Lannigan fighting again with those men who escaped from here. The sheriff and his men rushed up the track as fast as they could, only to discover that the hand-car was already gone, and that there was a wounded and unconscious man lying there as a result of the fight. They began to search for the rest of the outlaws, but gave it up after perhaps ten minutes, and decided to follow the hand-car and Lannigan. As they came back to get into their car, they took Masseno, the man the station agent here had been guarding in our car—and then I noticed Sam's prolonged absence. I rang for him and got no answer—and then I went to your stateroom and found him locked inside. We smashed open the door, and after that—oh, my God!"—he was stroking her hair in a pitiful, uncertain sort of way, as tho by the concrete sense of touch to assure himself that she was really there. "I thought I should go mad. I made them couple on this car. Mera, why did you do it?"

She sat up suddenly, flinging the tears from her eyes, brushing back the loosened waves of hair from her forehead. The car was in motion.

"They haven't found him!" she cried.

"You mean that he is here?" her father asked quickly

"I don't mean that he is, or that he isn't," she said quite as quickly. "The train is going on—so they have found nothing."

"But is he here?" demanded Mr. Pelenoff quietly.

She looked at her father for an instant before she answered.

"What would you do if I told you?" she inquired.

Mr. Pelenoff rose abruptly, and be-

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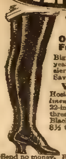

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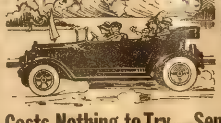

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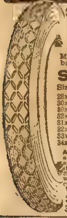

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gan to pace the narrow confines of the stateroom in an agitated manner

"Leaving aside for the moment the factor of your own personal safety in going away from the car, I—I am afraid you have acted too impulsively," he said anxiously. "You did not stop to consider the other consequences, dear. I quite understand that, and I am sure every one else will understand, too, if you will only do what you can to assist the law now. This is a very serious matter—very. I fear you do not realize——"

"That is the third time I have been told that," she broke in a little wearily.

"It is a very serious offense in the eyes of the law," he insisted gently. "They might make it very unpleasant and uncomfortable for you. In fact, I have no doubt but what they would, were it not that I am a foreign official and a guest—and I do not know to what extent even my position will protect you. You must understand, Mera, that, stripped of all sentimentality, you are obstructing the law and aiding and abetting in the escape of a criminal."

"He is not a criminal!" she asserted defiantly. "I know he is not! He is an innocent man!"

"You know he is not?"—Mr. Pelenoff's bushy eyebrows went up, and his forehead furrowed

"Oh, I know what you mean!" she exclaimed tensely. "How should I know that he is innocent; what right have I to sweep away, to dismiss the accusation of the authorities, the evidence in their possession so cavalierly, just because he perhaps told me so? Well, he did tell me so! And I believe him. He is guiltless!"

"Mera"—Mr. Pelenoff shook his head—"did you ever know a criminal to admit his guilt before his capture? The penitentiaries are full of 'innocent' men."

She answered his question with another

"Would you know him again if you saw him, father?"

AT THE apparent irrelevancy, Mr. Pelenoff stared.

"Eh!" he said perplexedly. "Why—why, of course I'd know him, without any doubt."

"I'm not sure that you would," she returned quietly. "If you had really looked at him when he stood here in the car, you would have more than his mere word to go upon. Were those gray eyes of his that looked at you so steadily, was the way he carried his head on those great, splendid shoulders the characteristics of a criminal? It was a fine, strong face, wasn't it, father? Not a face that made you think of a common thief; but more of a brave, clean, fearless gentleman. I—I think it must have been that which made me do what I did the first time he came, only I did not realize it then; and afterward, having just heard Mr. Felton's story, which I did not think of questioning, I was too angry to——"

"The first time he came?" echoed Mr. Pelenoff in a startled way. "What—what do you mean, Mera?"

She smiled inscrutably.

"Oh, I'm going to tell you," she said. "Not where he is, you know—that wouldn't be fair to you. But I've got to make you help me. I'm your daughter, and you'll have to protect me, won't you—dad?"

"You mean," gasped Mr. Pelenoff, "that—that there's something more to this affair? Something that I don't already know?"

She nodded.

"A little," she announced calmly. "On the way up from The Forks to Manloops, while Mr. Felton was telling us the story of the robbery, and I sat with my back against that stateroom door—he was hidden inside. I made him get off at Manloops. I'm sorry I did now."

"What!" Mr. Pelenoff sat down dazedly on the edge of the bed again. "Good God!" ejaculated Mr. Pelenoff in earnest perturbation.

Mera nodded her head again

"And so, you see," she added complacently, "that, as they say here in America, I'm in 'good and deep;' and now—so are you."

Mr. Pelenoff's fingers twisted nervously at his beard, then at his watch chain, and then back at his beard again. The big, pleasant, genial face wrinkled in mingled bewilderment, vexation and dismay.

"But—but this is an absolutely untenable position!" he burst out finally. "What am I to do?"

"Keep them form annoying me with their questions," she replied promptly. "You might as well; for not only will I not answer them, but I intend to do everything I can to prevent Larry Lannigan from being captured."

"Tut, tut! This is altogether too quixotic, too—too——" words failing, he waved his arms helplessly, jumped up once more, and again began to pace the stateroom floor. "Mera, what on earth have you done? The man actually seems to have attracted you—there appears to be a great deal of the personal element in this."

"There is," she declared ingenuously. "That a man should risk his life for mine is a very personal thing to me."

"Yes, yes—that, of course"—he brushed the reply away, as it were, with an impatient wave of his hand. "But you know what I mean—your position, your——"

"I know quite well what you mean," she said softly. "There is only one answer to that. No woman, no matter what her position, ever jeopardized that position or lowered it because of her interest in an honest man; no woman, no matter what her station, could reach higher than to a brave and true gentleman. Wealth does not buy one, does it? Nor does wealth make one."

"Gracious heavens!" murmured Mr. Pelenoff weakly "Has it gone as far as that!"

"I am only replying to your argument; and, for that matter, only repeating what I have heard you say yourself many times," she returned calmly. "As for it having 'gone as far as that,' it has gone this far: that I have helped him, and that you must help him now—because the simplest way to protect me from what you say may be serious trouble is to establish his innocence."

"But I do not admit him to be innocent, I——"

"Then prove it to satisfy yourself!" she urged. "He saved your life—and mine. Don't you owe him his chance?"

"Prove it?" muttered Mr. Pelenoff heavily. "Mera, I don't know what to make of this—or you. What do you want me to do?"

"Go back to Angel," she said quickly, earnestly

"And then—what?"

"Oh, I don't know yet!" she acknowledged in a troubled way. "Something—I haven't had a chance to think about it yet. We—we might engage a private detective on his side."

"You are talking nonsense, Mera!" Mr. Pelenoff's fingers sought his beard again. "If I could believe that he is innocent, I——"

"But he is!"—she was pleading now. "He is, father! I know he is! You——"

"Here—wait! Don't let us go over all that again!" protested Mr. Pelenoff hastily.

"Well, then"—she switched her attack—"there is another reason why he should appeal to you."

"What is that?" inquired Mr. Pelenoff.

"He is a railroad man," she said simply. "You have always said that there was a sort of bond between railroad men that existed nowhere else—that you were prouder of being a railroad man than anything else. Well, he is a railroad man, too—and one who loves his work, and is master of it in every detail, that is, of the practical side of it, just as you were, dad, when you were working your way up, and until a wider experience brought you to where you are today."

"But I do not know these things any more than I know that he is innocent," objected Mr. Pelenoff.

"But I do!" she cried joyously. "And I know you will help me. Don't you think I can read that dear old heart of yours? I knew you would! I knew you would! You are going to——"

"I am going to have a very bad half hour," he interrupted hurriedly, making a wry face, "trying to pacify that sheriff, thanks to a very obdurate and incomprehensible daughter who flaunts the law to its face."

Her arms went around his neck. She was laughing happily now.

"Promise me," she whispered.

"Well, well, we'll see." He kissed her affectionately, and walked toward the door. "Go to bed, now, Mera—you've been thru a terrible night."

She watched him cross the stateroom.

"Dad!"—as he reached the doorway.

He turned.

"Yes?"

Her eyes filled suddenly with tears.

"Just, God bless you, dad!" she said.

He was gone. She switched off the light, and lay down fully dressed on the bed. She was tired, too tired and

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weary to undress yet, but she was not sleepy—her brain was too active for that. And so she lay there, and over and over in her mind she rehearsed the scenes of the night—and very vividly there kept recurring the picture of a gray stretch of road, and a buckboard, and a galloping horse, and a shadowy form in the moonlight prone on the buckboard. He was safe. That big, trust-inspiring rancher would take care of that. And the wound, after all, was only a flesh wound, and it was only the loss of blood that had weakened him temporarily. In two or three days he would be quite strong again.

Her mind ran on—she was conscious that after a while the train had stopped, and she knew they had reached the station beyond Passnock. Then, a little later, she heard her father enter his stateroom which was the next one to hers

It was perhaps ten minutes after that that she sat suddenly upright on the bed, as the door at the forward end of the car opened, and an instant afterward the footsteps of two men outside in the corridor passed her own door. She listened intently. A murmur of voices came to her from the direction of the living-room compartment.

She got up, opened her stateroom door softly, and stole out along the corridor. One of the men was Felton, of course, for no one else would have the right to enter the car, and she was almost sure that she had recognized the voice of the other man who was there, evidently, on Felton's invitation. And then she was glad she had switched off her light before lying down, for it would have shown out thru the broken door. She had been right—the other man was Sheriff Laing.

She stopped half-way along the corridor. There was no need to go any farther; the voices reached her quite plainly now. She recognized Felton's tones:

"We're going back on No. 8 when she comes along. I advised it myself—a lay-over at Angel. We don't want any more of this kind of thing—gives the road a black eye. We can't do any work around here with a woman on board while any of the Masseno gang are still at large. One narrow squeak's enough."

"Well, then, in that case I'm going

(Continued on Page 22.)

* * *

A Pleasant Evening

(Continued From Page 4.)

sound where there was none, but must have felt a current of air against his back. As he turned, with cat-like swiftness, Jared strode forward. He tried not to strike the man's hat-covered head too hard with his shovel handle, but he seemed to feel the smooth hickory split in his hand. The victim fell as limply as tho there were no bones in his body; and Jared thrust the revolver in the other's face.

"I'd like an excuse to shoot!" His voice quivered wistfully.

The man knelt very still, giving him no execuse, saying nothing. Jared waited hopefully, but the other seemed frozen stiff, and able to hold that painful pose forever. At last, still suspicious, Jared, with his foot, pushed the lantern out of the fellow's reach; then backed slowly to where he could reach the switch beside the largest desk, and flooded the room with light.

"Hands above your head, and get up!" he ordered, reaching for the receiver of the telephone upon the desk.

His gaze never left that docile masked figure while he gave Central a number and prepared to wait, formulating in his mind apologies for taking the liberty to disturb his great uncle at such an unholy hour.

"Well?" The promptness of the reply, barked into his ear, almost surprised him into dropping the receiver. He stammered foolishly:

"T-that you, Uncle Abner—you up this late?"

"Late? It's only a little after 1!" snorted that astonishing old man, who had finished most of his sleeping years ago. "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I—I'm Jared, sir," said Jared, with the respect he had learned as a boy for the head of the house of Hearne. "Wish you'd come down to the factory. I caught a couple of burglars——"

"And I'd just got my pants off!" was the querulous interruption. "Be there in a minute." Then the snap of the receiver on the hook.

Jared ventured a quick glance at the man he had struck, who still lay uncannily still—possibly dead. Quite undisturbed, he resumed his watch of the standing burglar, and waited.

IN WHAT seemed an incredibly short space of time footsteps pattered outside, a key grated in the lock, and the door swung open. Old Abner Hearne stepped in briskly, a look of pleasureable anticipation upon his lean and leathery countenance, his bald head slick and shining. He had donned his pants, all right, but had forgotten his hat!

"So!" he said cheerfully, taking in the situation at a glance. "Glad you stopped 'em before they damaged the safe seriously Most excitement I've had since 'The Birth of a Nation' was shown at the Alameda Theater! Let's see who you are, my man!" And stepping forward with unexpected quickness, he snatched off the black mask, revealing a long face with a bent nose and sinisterly thin lips, dirty-looking freckles showing prominently against its pale skin.

"Mr.—Mr. McRae!" Jared gaped and stuttered, standing goggle-eyed; but even then not forgetting to hold his revolver steady.

"So it is." Old Abner Hearne did not appear surprised. Indeed, his voice might have been said to contain a note of unctuous satisfaction. "And the other—" stooping, he unmasked the man on the floor—"and the other, of course, is Cole!"

"Well—" Jared said weakly. "Well——"

"Watch McRae, Jared!" warned the old man. "If the pesky devil tries to run, shoot him. I'll call the chief of police."

Old Abner sat down in his comfortable swivel chair to put in his call. When his telephoning was done, he leaned back, crossed his legs and allowed a smile to stray over his countenance. He appeared to be enjoying himself as much as a boy stealing watermelons.

"They slipped me a jug of brandy first, sir," Jared explained. "I poured it in the fire——"

"Drugged, I'll bet a hat!" The old man put his hand to his head, and tried to conceal the look of astonishment that dawned upon his face. Hurriedly he bent on the sullen, frightened McRae a glance that was quite admiring.

"I guess it was," Jared agreed. "Then I fell and hit my head on something. Was unconscious for awhile. That's when they got in."

"Thought you were sleeping the sleep of the drunkard!" chirped the old man delightedly. "Thought they had you doped properly—but still wore masks and overalls, just in case anybody happened to see 'em! Been suspecting these fellows were crooked, but couldn't prove anything. They might have kept right on gathering my golden eggs if they hadn't been foolish enough to try to kill the goose. . . . Say, now, Jared, what would you do if you mere manager of this mill?"

"Why—why—why—" Jared had to pause and readjust his mind. No doubt that the old man was growing old—jumping from one subject to another that way. Childish. Have to be humored. "Well," ventured Jared, "for the first thing, I guess I'd lay off about a third of the hands and see if the others wouldn't go to work. So many of them, they get in each other's way. Mr. Cole's been padding the pay roll like sin."

"Good, boy; good!" cackled old Abner Hearne. "You'll get a chance to try it—beginning tomorrow!"

"No, sir—no, sir!" Jared looked scared. "I didn't mean—don't know anything about—I haven't any experience——"

"Pish-tush, boy! Tush-pish! I'll help you get experience. Got enough, myself, for both of us." Old Abner Hearne rose and stretched, pleased as an old tom cat that had just devoured the canary. "I aim to have an honest manager here, if I have to do half of his work for him. . . . Well, here are the officers. Come in, Chief—come right in. Been a very pleasant evening so far, hasn't it?"

THE END.

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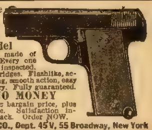

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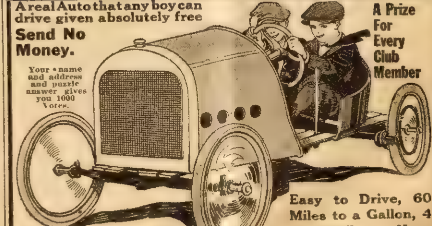

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Foreign Entanglements With the Dope Ring

By George Edwin

A NOTED American doctor, while recently discussing the ramifications of the international dope ring, made the startling statement—startling to me—that it was very difficult and almost impossible for the troops to obtain drugs in the countries recently warring against the Central Powers. He stated that the troops would be and were too far from the base of the "drug supplies." In answer to this I wish to state that if he had been with me for just one month in the early and middle days of the war he would have found that conditions were just the very opposite, and that the securing of cocaine, heroin and morphine was deplorably easy. I served with the infantry, and associated with troops of four different armies, and held a rank that enabled me to learn much that would not be noticed by lesser ranks or less experienced individuals.

Within twenty-four hours after arrival in a certain country in the winter of 1914-15 I met a drug peddler. We were waiting for our horse-car train to start over a certain sector of the fighting line, and, during the wait, several thousands of the natives of this city turned out to do us honor. They handed out foodstuffs, wines and liquors, and some thoughtful matrons even brought forth needles and thread in the hope of being of motherly service to us, doing the sewing as we enjoyed the good things that they had given us. It was a glorious get-together of those fighting for a common cause, and many were the encouragements and promises and admonitions given us. The only dark spot on this otherwise memorable occasion was the presence of a most daring drug peddler among the crowds—mostly among the troopers. In the general excitement, he had cast caution to the winds, and so it happened that I caught sight of him handing out the old familiar "deck" of drugs—to all appearances, a little square of white paper.

Of course, this peddler had a "blind" to cover his real mission among the crowds, and the "blind" consisted of a carrier-box filled with chocolates and candies, the box suspended from a strap that circled his neck. He would make a sale of chocolate or his other brands of sweets, and would then whisper to the soldier in a very cautious manner. Occasionally the little square of innocent looking white paper changed hands, and then again I saw others who shook their head and hand in a negative manner and walk away

Following some of the patrons of the "Whispered Goods," I located them sometime later in groups of two and three behind a string of box cars that stood off the track next to our train. They were having a regular "sniffing party," placing the "snow" upon the backs of their hands and sniffing it into their nostrils. As fast as I could travel, I made for the peddler, slamming into him with all the force of my own weight together with that of the sixty odd pounds of military equipment that sprouted out from all sides of me. The result was that the box and its contents went flying into the air, and as soon as the debris came to the ground, I wheeled suddenly, picked up several "decks" of drugs and trampled the remainder into the ooze and mud of the previous ten-day rain. The enraged peddler spoke to me in three different languages, two of which I generally understood and in which I answered him as I grabbed him by his coat collar and hustled him off in the direction of some policemen standing about fifty yards away. I had barely finished explaining the cause of the arrest to the officers when I noticed my train beginning to move off. I never heard further about this drug peddler, but I do know that they did not let him loose either on bail or for any other reason—for they don't do such foolish things in that country

AT ANOTHER railroad divisional point en route, we had a twenty minute stop at a station that had been turned into a sort of boiler-house, where hot water was made for tea and coffee for the troops passing thru. The boilers and fires were tended to by disabled and slightly wounded soldiers, and the flashing of the firelight on their vari-colored uniforms and trappings gave the scene a carnival like effect. From among these boiler-tenders there came a very sociable sergeant whose heavily bandaged arm gave the information that he had received a terrible smashing of that member. This man, too, spoke three languages, and I must say that his English had the ring of some of the finest east side dialect, with plenty of illustrative phraseology thrown in for good measure. He knew the east side all right, and further conversation brought to light the fact that he was fairly well acquainted with most of the east side districts of the world. As we chatted I could not help but notice the shattered arm, and when a suitable opportunity showed itself, I asked of the nature of his wounds. I was rewarded by the most interesting story of the glory of battle, the saving of the guns, and of him being the only man left alive

His story sounded all right, and he looked the part, but the one uncanny thing that caught my attention was the dirty and unkempt hands that protruded from the end of the bandages. The nails were packed with dirt and grease and filth, and it certainly did not look like the hand that belonged to a shattered arm. No nurse attending to that arm would neglect the cleansing of the hand and the manicuring of the nails, at least making the hand fairly presentable. I was just about convinced that he was a four-flusher of the purest kind, when as he walked away from me he whispered to two young soldier boys as he hesitatingly passed them. They both shook their heads, and he passed on thru the troops, stopping here and there among them to greet them and to whisper a few words to them. At last, after some whispering, three soldiers nodded assent and began to follow him as he led off into the unfrequented spot at the far end of the station platform. As the soldier boys broke away from him I met them and in quiet words informed them that unless they told me what had transpired between them and the wounded (?) sergeant I would place them under arrest, and that was one of the worst things that could happen to a man on active service in this particular nation's forces. The boys produced "decks" of cocaine and morphine, giving them to me with the request that I not put them under arrest. I acceded to their wish, and again sought out our wounded friend.

During further conversation with this criminal he told me that he had something that would make a man fearless enough to face the most terrific infantry attack, bayonet charge, or bombardment, and would like to know if I cared for any of this stuff. I stated that I had an idea that when I heard a twelve-inch gun bark either in front or behind me that I would need something to cheer me up. The result was that I purchased four "shots" of "coke" and one of morphine. As I walked away from him I purposely collided with his slung arm, and, as I had expected, he did not even wince. In fact he was first to speak, with "Sorry, Sir." Convinced that he was not a legitimately wounded man, I held a conference with the lieutenant in charge of the boilers in the station house, and five minutes later our pseudo-hero and drug peddler was securely handcuffed to an iron post that supported the station shed and further held secure by the many yards of bandages that had been wrapped around his "shattered arm." This incident distinctly shows the power of the international drug ring, for they knew many hours ahead of time of the movements of troops, knowing the name and number of the regiment, and the direction of their travel. I often wonder how many of the members of the international drug ring were spies for the enemy.

AT ANOTHER point where we were halted for twenty minutes I almost instantly picked out a drug peddler in the crowd of natives who had visited the station. This character was not a hard one to notice, for the bent form and emaciated features told only too plainly of drug addiction. He moved slyly up and down among the crowds which were at this point, held back from the troop train cars by a guard with fixed bayonet, reason for the bayonet being that some

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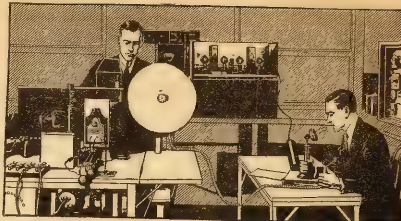

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of the boys were getting too many free gifts of intoxicants from the populace. The addict kept on his nervous wandering in and among the crowds, searching for an opening thru which he could reach the troop train. No opening showed itself, so he left the station. Being able to leave the train I followed him, taking good care not to get too far away from my train—a lesson learned on a previous occasion when some big six-footer had picked me up and thrown me onto the train, doing this because he knew that if I was missing en route I would be classed as a deserter and shot. However, I was able to follow him as he wended his way to the west end of the station building, where he met up with a five-foot board fence that had been recently erected for the purpose of keeping people away from the troop trains, and which extended for several hundred feet from the station platform. He halted before the fence, gazed at it for a few seconds, tapped it with his knuckles a few times, and then, with the agility of a trapeze performer, he sprung from the ground and caught the top of the fence with one hand and a foot. In another instant he had cleared the fence, coming down on his feet in the narrow space between the fence and the cars.

He halted before the first car he came to, in the doorway of which were gathered as many of the boys that could hang on and see the town and the crowds. The boys in this car paid little or no attention to their visitor, and so he proceeded to the next, where he went thru the same muttering as before. Suddenly I saw the boys stare at each other in a most peculiar manner for them, and I moved closer to them. About two minutes later two boys left the car and followed their new-found friend to the space between the cars, where the couplings are. Well, I dropped from above just in time to stop the sale of cocaine, and, after ordering the men back into their car, turned my attention to the drug peddler. I caught his coat collar and an arm and began to hustle him out of there pretty fast. It was easy work to handle him, for the wretched creature hadn't nerve left to resist or protest, for all vestiges of manly courage had long since been snuffed out by the use of drugs. After handing him over to the police authorities, we made a search of his pockets, finding several allotments of cocaine and one fair-sized bottle filled with morphine. The last I saw of him was as he stepped into a funny-looking patrol wagon that looked as tho it would fall apart before it reached the police station.

One of the biggest surprises that I ever had came when I made the discovery that the illicit drug peddlers find plenty of business in and about hospitals. While in one European hospital—a seaport town—I found several drug peddlers of both sexes doing a brisk business among the wounded. Men and women, bringing fruit and delicacies, visited me with much-appreciated regularity, so regular in fact that about the fifth or sixth visit divulged the fact that they would be able to supply me with any drug that I craved. Strange to say, none of these peddlers were addicts—that is, none of those who came my way. In fact, I never saw more wholesome looking women than those who used to come and chat with me. Of course, whenever I could I took quick action against these peddlers and some mighty swift justice was handed out to some of them. So bad was the drug evil in one town where I was hospitalized that officers of high rank held "snow parties," or "sleigh rides," as they termed them. But these parties came to a sudden and very sad end one night when a high-ranking officer ran amuck with a loaded revolver. The chase lasted some time, and this unfortunate fellow, finally being cornered, hurled himself from the top of of a cliff down onto the rocks several hundred feet below.

I was often amused by the statements of some of these women peddlers, which were to the effect that they were selling these drugs from purely patriotic motives, doing all they could to alleviate the pain and suffering of those who had so cheerfully bared their breasts to the enemies' guns. Nevertheless, their "patriotism" did not hinder them from asking a badly shattered soldier boy for from five to ten times the actual worth of the drug—and the price was not high because of shortage of the stuff, for there never seemed to me to be any shortage, and wherever I went I could get what drugs I desired if I had the money.

The cheaper type of peddler would loiter about the hospital-ground entrances, waiting for "walking patients." If business was too slow this way, they visited the hospital with fruits and delicacies as an excuse to hide their real reason for their visits to the "poor wounded heroes." It is regrettable to think that down deep in their hearts they din't care whether the boys got well or not—all they had in mind was the damning of the souls of the soldier boys.

* * *

The Strange Case of Southpaw Skaggs

(Continued From Page 6.)

trains when the manager didn't have the price of transportation, stood me in good stead. I rode the bumpers pretty near all thru southwestern Texas, across New Mexico, and thru a good share of Arizona before I found an ostrich proprietor who was willin' to sell anythin' but plumes.

Finally, near Phoenix, I found a man who was so mad at a big, rangy ostrich that he was almost willin' to give the bird away. I don't blame the man any, as the bird had kicked him somethin' shameful, and all the beefsteaks at the Chicago packin' houses wouldn't make much impression on the black eye he was carryin'. Bob Fitzsimmons, the bird's name was, and the man didn't act none too friendly toward the ostrich when he was discussin' the sale with me.

"If it's a leg muscle you're after, that bird's got the greatest in the world," he says. "He can reach over an eight-foot barb-wire fence and land on your solar plexus jest as easy as a baby's reach up and yank its mother's apron strings. You can take that bird and remove the tendons from both legs if you want to, and then I'll jest tie him to a stake in front of my house and gloat over him when he finds he can't land anythin' but love taps where he used to deliver knock-out punches."

"All right," I says, "but I am confident that the bird ain't goin' to be hurt any, except havin' his speed limit cut down from ninety-nine miles an hour to about ten, which will save him lots of fines in the police court. Breakin' or removin' tendons ain't a serious matter to anybody but baseball pitchers like me."

The upshot of the deal was that, in consideration of one hundred dollars cash, the ostrich was loaned to me by the party of the first part, which was the ostrich man, on condition that all railroad charges to and from the ranch be paid by the party of the second part, which was me. Futhermore, in case of the doctor performin' the common trick of sewin' any operatin' instruments in the bird's leg, and the bird dyin' therefrom, the party of the second part was to pay the full cash value of the animal, accordin' to ostrich quotations on the day of said bird's demise.

Doc was in his glory when the ostrich and me showed up at his office, ready for operatin' purposes. He had got a hull medical college interested in the experiment and there was an army of amachoor sawbones and nurses ready to transplant a tendon from that Sahara wanderer to the disabled wing of Southpaw Skaggs. In fact, they was so eager that I was afraid they wouldn't stop at one tendon, but would rob the bird of all the muscle he had and make me a reg'lar ostrict Sandow.

They had some trouble with the ostrich, and three of Doc's assistants was laid low with kicks before the bird was finally strapped down and chloroformed. It should have been funny to me, on the next operatin' table, but the sight of all the cold steel layin' around in full view had robbed me of the power to laugh. Next minute I was losin' consciousness, and, when I came to, my glass arm was tied in a long bandage, and Doc Bings was feelin' my pulse.

"Purty work, Skaggsy, old man," says Doc. "You've got the game cinched now, if you just keep quiet a while. The operation was a great success. You've got an ostrich tendon as thick as my middle finger spliced on to that busted sinew in you pitchin' arm, and in six months you ought to be able to throw a baseball thru a two-inch pine plank from the pitcher's slab."

"How about the ostrich?" I says, sorter weak, for my arm was stingin' as if an inshoot had caught me at the plate.

"Oh, he'll be all right in a few weeks, except for a limp in one leg. He can't kick hard enough to break a pane of glass, but outside of that, there's nothin' the matter with him."

I leaned back, contented, on finding that I would not have to pay any damages to the ostrich man, and then began a long and dreary period of waitin'. In a few weeks I had my arm out of bandages, and then, when the first days of spring came, and the kids begun infestin' the corner lots, I got out and rolled the horsehide pill to some of the little shavers. At first I didn't try to do nothin' but toss the ball. Doc was wachin' me like a hawk, and if I tried to throw overhand, he'd walk up and roast me.

"Cut it out, you brainlss Sahara sand-trotter," he'd say. "Remember you ain't a common ball player any more, but are an investment. There's a lot of money tied up in you, and we can't afford to have you ruin that new wing by tryin' to steam up too soon. Toss 'em for a week or two, and then you can begin lobbin' 'em—and after that I'll tell you when to throw in the fireworks."

I FOLLERED Doc's instructions to the letter, and didn't begin throwin' any speedy balls until my arm felt as good as new. In fact it felt better than new, and I had hard work to keep from pickin' up cobblestones or chunks of iron and heavin' 'em at things for the pure joy of throwin'. But every day I loosened up a little more, under Doc's directions. He would put on the catcher's mitt and coach me in control, for I found that I was inclined to be a little wild on account of the new strength that had developed in my left arm. The balls 'd plunk harder and harder in Doc's mitt, and finally I seen him wince, and hop around on one foot and blow on his fingers. Next day he had a semi-professional catcher hired to take his place at the receivin' end, but inside of a week that feller had retired with bunged-up hands.

Doc got a stockier catcher, who could manage to smother my twisters, but I seen it was goin' to be hard to find any-

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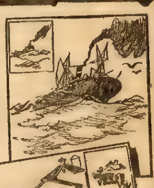

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body to hold me when I got to pitchin' right. I could make the ball whizz over the plate like a streak. The eye could hardly foller it, and what was more, I had all my old control. I could shoot a fast one acrost the inside corner of the plate, and then, with almost the same pitchin' motion, I could lob a slow floater acrost the outside corner. The curves 'd all break at least a foot nearer the plate than of my old curves 'd do, showing what tremendous speed that ostrich tendon was givin' my arm, and Doc 'd just howl with delight when a sizzler plunked into the catcher's mitt.

"I can see 'em smoke!" he'd yell. Rusie and Walter Johnson rolled into one wouldn't have enough margin on you to draw two bits more at the turnstile. You're the biggest prize in the national grab-bag. You're the only superphenom the game of baseball has ever known, and all we've got to do is to find the right kind of a berth for you."

As I was a free agent, and was at liberty to sign anywhere I pleased, it was decided that the best scheme was to get the big league clubs biddin' for my services, and Doc was to have two thousand out of my purchase money. I figgered that the best dope was to pitch against some big league club in a practice game before the season opened. In the meantime, Doc, who knowed several sportin' editors, had some of the big papers print items about the rumored return to form of the once celebrated Southpaw Skaggs. The sportin' editors didn't half believe the statement, but printed it out of friendship to Doc. The news wasn't long in travelin', and when the big league champeens struck our town, on their way home from trainin' in the South, I found the manager chuck full of curiosity when I called on him.

"What's this I hear about you comin' to life, Skaggs?" he says. "Next thing they'll be saying that the mummy of Rameses the Second has crawled out of its grave clothes and is goin' to play ball."

"Laugh if you want to," I says, "but, when I git thru pitchin' against you tomorrow you'll be chasin' me around with a fountain pen and a blank contract and weepin' scaldin' tears because I won't sign under ten thousand a year. I'm goin' against you with the rawest lot of amachoors behind me that ever crawled into uniforms. Half of 'em don't know which end of the bat to hold when they step to the plate. But we picked the poor ones because I'm goin' to play the hull game against you alone—just me and that big-fisted Backstop Kelly. I know he's a joke throwin' to bases, but you needn't figger on a base-stealin' percession, because there ain't goin' to be enough of your men reach first to muss up the bag none."

I could see that the manager was dyin' with curiosity, and he watched me like a hawk when I tossed a few in practice jest before the game was called next day. But I didn't put on any steam, and he couldn't tell a thing before the game begun

The visitors, bein' fresh from the Southern trainin', was brown as berries and hard as nails. They had the speerit that makes a champeen team, tho they was a little shy of pitchers for a long, grindin' season, and it done my heart good to see 'em scamper around the diamond and outer gardens in practice. There's somethin' about the workin' of a real baseball machine that certainly gits to the core of any man who knows and loves the national game. As for the team behind me, I didn't lie when I described it to the manager of the big leaguers. I think it was about the rawest collection of sand-lotters I ever saw in my life, and the big leaguers nearly fell off their bench laughin' at the way the ball was booted and juggled when it come our turn to practice.

But with the first ball I shot over the plate when the game had been called, I could see the jaws of them confident professionals drop. I follered it with a swift out curve that ddn't break three feet from the batter's shoulder. He thought he was goin' to be hit and dropped into the dust, but the ball just cut the inside corner of the plate and the second strike was bawled. Then I worked a change of pace, and the ball floated over the exact center of the plate, big as a house, but the batter had struck at it more'n half a second before it arrived.

I heard Doc's familiar, encouragin' whoop after I had fanned out the third man.

"Go it, Sahara!" he yelled, when the visitors had trotted out onto the field, the most puzzled-lookin' lot of athletes you ever saw. "Show 'em what a real pitcher is like!"

Well, the feats that I performed in the box that day I hate to talk about, bein' a modest man by nature. That ostrich arm of mine was workin' to perfection. I shot the cannon-balls over the pan till my catcher come out and pleaded for mercy on account of his hands. Then I made him play back to the grand stand until the third strike, when he come up and generally grabbed a floater from under some overanxious player's bat. The champeen swatters of the big league was toys in my hands. Men with an average of over three hundred against the gilt-edged pitchin' of the world, made passes as feeble as babes, and I could hear the manager oratin' to 'em on the bench in a way that'd make Patrick Henry seem like a deaf mute

"What's the matter with you high-priced show girls?" he'd yell, after the usual trio of strikeouts. "You hit like the oldest resident of the Soldiers' Home killin' flies with a folded newspaper. Don't you know that this feller who's servin' the pill was only a second-rater when Methusalem was a kid? He uster be deck hand on Noah's ark, but here you fellers let him come along and go thru you like a yegg-man in the mint. I'll bush-league the hull bunch of you if there ain't some runs next innin'."

But threats and tears wasn't any use. I had the Geronimo sign on every batter. In fact, no human bein' could do anythin' with what I was servin'. Once the captain of the visitors, in the sixth innin', managed to hit the ball and it rolled feebly at my feet. I picked it up and then stood with it in my hand and let the captain run to first. Then he stole second and third, but I fanned the next three men, while the captain died in awful agony on the third sack.

But, as a matter of fact, we wasn't much better in the way of runs. The batters we had couldn't hit the other pitcher out of the diamond, and the score was nothin' to nothin' at the end of the eighth. Up to the final session my arm was workin' smoother and better than ever, but I was fightin' off a peculiar sensation that I had felt several times before but had paid no attention to it. I felt awful hungry—a kind of hunger that a had never felt so strong in my life. I had never chewed tobacco, but when I saw a player take a bite off a plug I grabbed it out of his hand and swallowed the hull thing. The look of astonishment on his face was something never to be forgotten, but I calmly walked over to the water jar, and, after taking a few little nippy, chicken-like swallows, I broke the handle off the tin cup and swallowed that. When I stepped onto the mound to open the ninth inning, I realized what was the matter with me.

The transplantin' of that bird's tendon to my arm was turnin' me into an ostrict.

WHEN a full realization of my predicament came over me I broke into a cold sweat. I hit the first man up and he dropped into the dust with a howl of pain. The ball had caromed off his ribs, and he was able to go to first in a few minutes, but if it had hit him a square blow he would have gone to the hospital. The next batter got four wild ones, and the coachers for the visitors was out on the lines; thinkin' they had me rattled. I was rattled all right, but they didn't do it. It was the work of a dad-busted ostrict from the hot sands of Arizona. The appetite for somethin' bright and shiny and hard was growin' stronger within me, and, when the umpire dropped the little nickel-plated indicator he carried in his hand, I grabbed it up and

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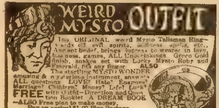

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swallowed it. He staggered back, white as a sheet, but I turned and pitched the ball over the plate and he had to keep at his work.

I give three more bases on balls before I managed to pull myself together and fan out the side, but two runs had been forced over the plate. We opened the second half of the ninth with the score two to nothin' against us. Two men fanned, and then Kelly, the catcher, who batted just ahead of me and who was a good natural hitter, lined out a pretty single that a faster man could have stretched into two bases. Steppin' to the plate, I fidgeted around while the other pitcher jockeyed awhile with Kelly, tryin' to catch him off first. Slyly I raked up a little pile of gravel with one foot and then picked it up and swallowed it. No food ever tasted better to me in my life than that handful of gravel, and, under its inspiration, I reached out after a high, wide one and drove it to the far corner of the field. The hit was good for a home run with trimmin's, and as I tore past first, I heard Doc whoop.

I turned second, and, just before reachin' third, saw that the left-fielder had got the ball and was relayin' it back to the diamond.

"Go on," fog-horned Doc, above everybody else. "You've got time to make it. Run, Sahara, run!"

But my pen falters when I try to describe what happened. The yells of the crowd and players had inspired a new sensation in my heart—somethin' I had never known before. There is no other name for it but fear. I thought horsemen were chasin' me, and my sole desire was to hide. Half way between third and home was a sandy stretch. Droppin' on my knees I stuck my face in the sand. Then, I breathed a sigh of relief.

"No one can see this here ostrich now," I thought. "I'm safe from pursuit as long as my head is in the sand."

Then the ball plunked into the mitt of the third baseman, and he ran up and tagged me and our chance to tie the game was over. I had pitched the most wonderful game ever twirled against big leaguers. I had struck out twenty-six out of a possible twenty-seven, hit one and passed four, and lost my own game because the ostrict in me riz superior to the man.

I met Doc Bings at the gate, and he was weepin'. He had seen it all in a flash.

"Skaggy, old boy," he said, "I'm sorry. I don't care about my loss, but it's because I've fastened such a terrible thing on you. Why, man, you may even begin to grow ostrict plumes instead of whiskers."

"Never mind, Doc," I said. "All I want is somethin' satisfyin'. No ordinary grub for me after this. If you'll stake me to the price of a pocketful of assorted nails, you and me are square."

Tell Me Your Problem

By Peggy Parsons

**A word of counsel when the heart is in it
May clear a year of trouble in a minute.**

Dear Miss Parsons: I am a boy of fourteen and a half years, am 5 feet and 4 inches tall. How can I avoid being a "slow poke"? It seems to take me a long time to accomplish anything that I undertake. How can I clear my face of pimples? What can I do for falling hair and dandruff? May I call again Miss Parsons?
SLOW POKE BEN.

Perhaps you should use a little power in overcoming this "slow poke" habit of yours. Sometimes boys of your age aren't anxious to complete their tasks and gradually find themselves slow in everything they have to do. It may be that you try to hurry too much. Take things slowly and be sure that you do them well, that is the main thing. There are too many young boys slipping through their daily routine just half doing the things which should be given more time and thought. Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables and be sure that you drink enough water. These things are vital in keeping one's blood and entire system in the best condition. If you feel that you are in need of a tonic for your blood, you should consult your family physician. Dandruff is probably causing your hair to come out. Keep the scalp clean and brush your hair regularly. There are a number of reliable remedies on the market for dandruff or if you choose I will send you a recipe for this ailment, in return for a self addressed, stamped envelope. Come again Ben.

My Dear Miss Parsons: I have a friend who recently moved to another city. He hasn't written to me and I am wondering if I should write to him. I obtained his address from a relative of his. My mother says I must not do it because it would not be proper. I am sixteen years old. WAITING.

Do as your mother says and do not write to your friend until he writes first. He will probably write as soon as he is located and gets straightened around. He has undoubtedly been busy and had other more important things to do before taking care of his correspondence.

My Dear Miss Parsons: I am a girl of 15 years and have a few freckles. What can I do to remove them? I have been corresponding with a boy whom I met on the train. He now works on the train that I ride to take my music lessons. The second time I saw him he asked me to marry him. I told him I was too young and he said that if he saw me with another man he would kill me. Please tell me what to do. BLUE EYES

I am sure that this young man is stretching his imagination a point when he makes such broad statements. Of course you are too young to consider getting married, particularly to a young man whom you have known such a short time and one you know so little about. He is, no doubt, a young boy seeking romance and adventure when he makes such rash statements. If you can take another train to your music lessons, I should advise your doing so, merely to avoid seeing him, however, I am sure you have no reason to fear him. He has possibly been reading story books. Tell your parents of this young man's threat and they will know better than I want to tell you to do.

Dear Miss Parsons: I am a girl of almost 16 years of age and have gone out with gentlemen friends quite a bit. Is it proper for a young man to take me to a show or a dance and afterwards suggest to get something to eat? Should we order an ordinary meal or just a sandwich or something light?
BLUE EYES.

Most young people find that their appetites late in the evening are easily satisfied by an ice cream soda or some similar dish. It is not healthful to eat large meals before retiring, and when one does visit a restaurant after a dance or the theater, something light should be ordered, such as a sandwich or perhaps a dish of salad which isn't too rich.

My Dear Miss Parsons: I am 16 years old and have been going with a young man of 21. I met another boy who came to see my father on business and I have fallen deeply in love with him. My father insists I marry the first fellow. What can I do? D. W.

I am sure that if you explain to your father that you do not love this other young man he will not insist upon your marrying him. Are you sure that you no longer love him and that you were not merely fascinated by this young man who came to see your father on business? Do not be in haste when deciding which you love. You are young and will have plenty of time to make up your mind.

My Dearest Miss Parsons: I am a girl of 18 summers, with beautiful black curly hair, which everyone admires, and big, sparkling eyes. The question is about my eyes. One

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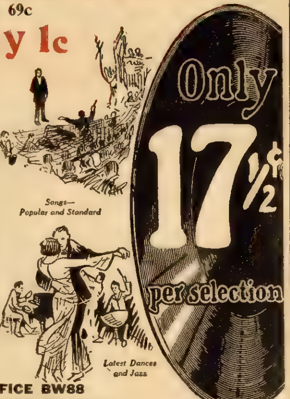

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☐ When You and I Were Young, Maggie / My Old Kentucky Home 4011 (Songs)
☐ Humoresque / Souvenir 4015 (Violin Solos)
☐ Love's Old Sweet Song / In the Gloaming 4031 (Songs)

Standard (Con'd)
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☐ Poet & Peasant Overture, No. 1 / Poet & Peasant Overture, No. 2 4036 (Bands)
☐ Mabina Malamalama / Kamehameha March 4008 (Hawaiian)
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☐ What'll I Do / Somewhere With Someone 2146
☐ Just a Girl Men Forget / Midnight Rose 2116
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☐ Oh Baby Don't Say No / Don't Waste Your Tears Over Me 2145
☐ What Does the Pussy Cat Mean / The Village Postmaster 2150
☐ Daddy's Wonderful Pal / Pretty Soon 2153
☐ Hinky Dinky Parlay Vous / Jimminy Gee! 2152
☐ Smile Will Go a Long, Long Way / It's a Man Every Time 2138
☐ That Old Gang of Mine / If I Knew You Then 2119
☐ Last Night on the Back Porch / Every Night I Cry 2126
☐ Cla-wence Don't Tweat Me So Wuff / When It's Night Time in Italy 2136
☐ Stay Home, Little Girl, Stay Home / When Lights Are Low 2132

POPULAR DANCES
☐ There's Yes Yes In Your Eyes / Pua Carnation 1210
☐ Why Did I Kiss That Girl / Lazy 1205
☐ What'll I Do / Cocoanut Dance 1207
☐ From One Till Two / Wailana (Drowsy Waters) 1208
☐ Jealous / Rosa Lee 1209
☐ She Wouldn't Do What I Asked Her To / I Wonder Who's Dancing With You Tonight 1199
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of them is crossed, which spoils my looks. Is there anything that can be done. I am so unhappy on account of this.

AN UNHAPPY GIRL.

I am sure something can be done to help you. There are specialists who now perform some wonderful feats which seem almost unbelievable. I should advise you to consult your family physician who can no doubt recommend an eye specialist who can tell you if your affliction can be corrected.

Dear Miss Parsons: I am going with a girl who is considered very good looking, but I hear remarks that this girl does not care for me. I have taken her to many parties and she always acts real nice and never says a word about not caring for me. Do you think she really loves me? She has a cousin about her age, and she is very jealous. Do you think that she is starting these remarks? When a boy takes a girl to a dance, should he dance with her first? How often should one dance with the girl he escorts?

WAITING.

A jealous person is sometimes apt to say little things that lead to much unhappiness. It does seem that this young woman's cousin might be the one who is starting these remarks. If this one you care for continues to go about with you and let you know she cares for you, you shouldn't doubt her word so much as to feel dubious about her affections. Turn a deaf ear to these remarks and do not pay any attention to them. A young man generally dances the first dance with the young lady he takes, and usually the last dance is engaged, as well as several in between. Many dances now give out programs to be filled with the names of those with whom you are to dance; however, many couples attend dances and dance only by themselves. Either rule is correct, however. I believe in the former, as it gives the guests a better chance to become acquainted, and each has a better time.

Dear Miss Peggy: I have just moved into a small house and am making all my own drapes. I would like to have you tell me what to buy for my bedroom. I would like to purchase something really pretty, but not so expensive. I expect to use silk later on, but we have had a number of bills right at this time and would like to economise.

NEWLYWEDS.

Gingham curtains, which have won a popular place in the home "interior decorators'" eyes, would be very pretty for your bedrooms, particularly in the summer time. There are many pretty patterns from which to choose, and this material is lovely when it has a bit of cross-stitch worked along the hem, in the corners, or in some special design. This is a washable material and it takes many tubs to fade it, if it is properly handled. If you care to make your bed cover, tops for dressing tables and cushion tops to match I am sure that you will find the results quite delightful.

* * *

Something to Make Thinkers Think.

Beheadings and Curtailings.

233—1. Behead and curtail to be spotted and have a kind of fruit.

2. Behead and cutail a man of high office in Turkey and get a kind of tree.

3. Behead and curtail a place where butter and cheese are made and get atmosphere.

4. Behead and curtail a book of accounts and get an abrupt border.

5. Behead and curtail a substantiated fact and get a deep track made by a wheel.

6. Behead and curtail moral failures and get a very cold substance.

7. Behead and curtail a feeling of malice and get a deep hole in the ground.

8. Behead and curtail to be habitually untidy about one's person and get to feel deep affection for some one.

Charade.

234—My first is a circus
We see in a tent,
Where is kept the striped tige
And the huge elephant.

My second in court
Seeks for justice, you see,
And is tried by a judge
And the court's jury.

My whole is a thing
Which we find in a store;
And it holds jewels rare,
And many things more.

Two Easy Word-squares.

I.

235—1. That which is long if it has no turning.
2. A word used in describing a desert.
3. A number.
4. A famous garden.

II.

1. The name of a chain of mountains.
2. The most famous city in Italy.
3. So may it be.
4. A river in Siberia.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES

230—Musical Double Acrostic.

Wagner, Handel.
Worth, aquila, gain, nod, ease, real.

231—A Beehive.

1. B-low. 2. B-ill. 3. B-lame. 4. B-lank. 5. B-last. 6. B-lend. 7. B-less. 8. B-link. 9. B-lack. 10. B-lot. 11. B-old. 12. B-order.

232—Four-word Square.

N E S T
E C H O
S H I N
T O N E

It is not desired that readers send in the answers to the puzzles. They are offered simply as brain teasers, and the correct answers will be printed the following week.

* * *

His Way With the Ladies

(Continued From Page 2.)

me like that once more I'll wring your neck until your next collars will be two sizes smaller."

He calmed down like a clam in a ballroom.

"Excuse me, Eddie," he apologized as we sat down on a bench. "I was just thinking this would be a peach of a time to prove how much of a ladies' man I really am."

A gentle breeze was wafting itself over the park. Otherwise I'd have sworn that he was having a sunstroke.

"I'll do it," he insisted. "And to prove that I'm a sport I'll bet twenty-five dollars that I get by with it."

Now I've heard of stealing a widow's well rope, pushing young ducks in the water and pulling up sprouting cotton. But the idea of accepting twenty-five dollars from Amos didn't agree with me. Somehow I rebelled against it.

"Christmas is quite a few weeks off," I reminded him. "You needn't hurry with my present."

Evidently my words failed to have a soothing effect. Reaching into a pocket he dug up two tens and a five spot and waved the bills aloft. At sight of so much real money I felt like standing at attention.

"I suppose you voted in the last election?" I asked as I reached for my wallet.

"Sure," he returned. "Why?"

"Well, you have to be able to read and write and understand the Constitution. It's possible that you know what you are doing."

"It's a go?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Shake!"

We shook.

"Now, let's see," he mused, looking about carelessly. "There's a demure little creature over there."

I followed his gesture and perceived a charming young damsel. She was alone except for an ugly bull dog attached to a slender chain. I watched the animal for a few moments and noticed that he opened and closed his mouth regularly, finishing the movement with a swipe of his tongue across the lower molars. Probably going thru light training.

"I wouldn't take her, Amos." I tried to conceal my alarm. "The chain is entirely too light."

He grinned and rose slowly.

"I'll just walk over. Watch me."

I have seen men go over the top, their faces set with grim determination. But I never saw any one enter No Man's Land as calmly as Amos did. I shut my eyes when he drew near the young lady. The sight of blood always makes me sick.

But when I opened them the scene I beheld almost stripped the gears of my breathing apparatus.

Amos stopped in front of her and lifted his hat gracefully. She answered with a smile and the next instant he was seated beside her. He said something and she laughed merrily.

And the dog! Instead of making Amos a cripple for life the brute licked his hand.

I pinched myself to see if I was asleep. I wasn't. When I looked back at Amos his arm was over back of the bench.

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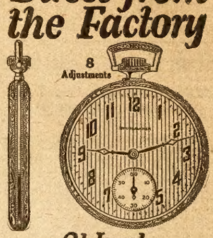

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No letter necessary. Just mail this blank with remittance.

They passed a few minutes later and he doffed his hat and laughed.

Now it isn't every day that I make an effort to part with twenty-five bucks. Therefore I sauntered after them. I wanted to make sure she didn't have him arrested or sic the dog on him.

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If you could prevent the wear and tear on your glands caused by sickness, age, disease, etc., you would look and feel as young at 70 as at 25. Science, however, has solved the secrets of the glands and now for the first time shows you the true way to keep or regain your vigor by feeding and replenishing the most important glands!

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The Lewis Method will positively Rebuild and Replace worn and wasted gland tissue. It will increase vitality, both physical and mental. It will renew strength, especially as to the functioning of the glands. It will increase your endurance and render you less liable to fatigue. It will improve your general health, and in most cases cause a marked improvement in your appearance. Your appetite will increase and you will surely gain in weight if you are at present in a "run-down" condition.

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This Gland Building Treatment is the greatest rebuilder of worn or wasted gland tissues that has ever before been prescribed.

It will act very much like a powerful force that reached down, picked you up when you were helpless and set you on your feet with the will and the power to be a man among men.

Only those who have had the privilege of testing this Method can have any real comprehension of its wonderful efficiency.

The Demonstration Treatment will prove to you beyond reasonable doubt that the Lewis Method of Gland Growth and Rejuvenation is the most wonderful treatment for the renewing of strength and vigor that has ever been conceived.

It is based entirely on the principle of Feeding Actual Gland Substance Direct to the Glands—thereby actually renewing and rejuvenating them.

This Method of giving new life to the glands is advocated and endorsed by the leading students of gland therapy throughout the world—including Dr. Arnold Lorand, who is generally conceded to be the greatest living authority on this subject.

The actual Method of Treatment used by us is the result of exhaustive experiments covering several thousand cases, during the past two years.

Send to the Lewis Laboratories, 236M Lewis Bldg., Market & Washington Sts., Chicago, Ill., for your Demonstration Treatment NOW. Don't wait until it is too late and all the free treatments are gone. If you will follow this impulse and send in your name before you let this paper get out of your hands you will be sure to receive your free treatment within a few days. Then you will see and know, and will be in the happy position of being able to judge for yourself. Be sure you mention whether the treatment is wanted for male or female. If you wish, please inclose 10 cts. for postage and packing.

All correspondence and all packages sent by them come to you in plain, sealed containers.

I found them eating ice cream. At least the young lady was eating. Amos had already finished his and was looking longingly at the plate across the table.

When he saw me he leaned over and patted her hand and received a saucy smile in return.

Dismally I made my way back to the city. I didn't have the heart to wait for Amos. I paid him the next morning and took my medicine like a man.

NEARLY a week later the office door opened and I heard a sweet voice inquire for Amos. I turned and gazed into the eyes of the wonderful maiden who caused me to part with my hard-earned twenty-five.

And she called him Amos.

It seemed that the walls were going to cave in. As soon as I regained my breath I invited her to be seated.

"Amos isn't in just now," I managed to inform her. She smiled at me and my heart jumped up and wrestled with my Adam's apple.

"Just like the old dear," she said, glancing at a jeweled wrist watch. "Every time we take lunch in town he manages to be at least thirty minutes late. And to think, we've been married only three months!"

THE END.

* * *

The Iron-Rider

(Continued From Page 16.)

back with you," she heard the sheriff growl.

"You?"

"Sure! Parsons can look after the men here. I'm going back to look after—that girl." A fist crashed suddenly down on the arm of a wicker chair. "She won't talk, eh? Her father can't do anything with her, eh? Well, if I had my way, she'd talk d—d fast. And because she's the daughter of who she is I can't do anything, eh? Well, there's more ways than one. I tell you, Felton, she knows where Lannigan is. There ain't a doubt of it! The man was wounded; he couldn't have got very far alone. What's become of him? It's a ten-to-one bet she fixed him up somehow before she showed herself. If we could find that hand-car it would help some. The men are going back again over every inch of the right of way from here to Passnock as soon as it's daylight—and she, d—n it, she knows where he is all the time! By G—d, Felton, I call that a bit too thick! I'll teach her to hand me the laugh before I'm thru!"

"Better be careful what you do, Laing," Felton's voice responded uneasily. "That's my advice. The old man pulls some pretty long strings."

"Careful!" Sheriff Laing laughed unpleasantly. "That's just what I'm going to be—careful to see that she don't get away with it! It's her next move—at Angel. And I'll be there to check it! See?"

Mera crept back to her stateroom—and undressed in the dark.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MAN WITH THE BUCKBOARD.

IN A wicker lounging-chair sat Mera, her brow puckered up into anxious, preoccupied wrinkles. She alternated an abstracted gaze between the little Italian boy, Tommasco Ingorbordino, and the uninspiring, butte-dotted land at the lower and quieter end of the Angel yards—the sole and altogether uninviting view afforded by the car window.

Tommaso, obviously conscious of the luxury of his surroundings to which he could not accommodate himself, tho it was by no means his first visit to the car, shifted uneasily in another chair opposite to Mera, his bright, small face reflecting as in a mirror, as he watched her, the perturbation that was in her own.

"Tommaso," she said suddenly, impetuously, "there's just you and I! What are we going to do?"

Tommaso's eyes flashed with passion, and his hands clinched.

"We will kill the Signor Laing, who is a pig!" he cried fiercely.

It was evidence of her distraught state of mind that she should answer the boy's wild outburst seriously.

"That would not do any good, Tommaso. Some one else would take his place."

She shook her head, and turned again to the window. It was the third afternoon since the car had been brought back to Angel to remain there on the same identical spot, a short distance below the town, considerately removed as far as possible from the clang and roar of the shops and the bustle of the main yards. Three days—and nothing!

It seemed as tho she might have done more, as tho she might have accomplished something—that her failure was due to miserably misguided effort. And yet what could she have done that she had not attempted? Her brain was weary, aching in a dull, tired way.

In the little mountain town there had been no "private detective" whose servives she could enlist. Her one stanch ally and confidant was this boy of 15. Not that she despised him—far from it! His love and loyalty for the man who had saved his life amounted to nothing less than a passionate adoration, while his turbulent, untamed young soul would have carried him to any length in Larry's behalf. But he was only a boy. She had gone to him in the hospital, remembering Larry's account of him, and, on the second day, finding the boy able to be about again, had found comfortable lodgings for him in the town. Since then he had been her shadow.

Her father's attitude had been all that she could have asked or expected, she realized; but, tho he was still tolerant toward her efforts, she sensed the fact that his own endeavors had had anything but the result she had prayed and hoped for. He was now, she was forced to admit, more than ever convinced that Larry was guilty. He had gone about it in the big way that was the only way he knew. Openly acknowledging that he owed a debt to the man who was being hunted as a criminal, he had gone to the railroad authorities, to Manley, the superintendent, to every one who might by any possibility be able to throw any light upon the crime, and had expressed both his earnest desire to help the man and the hope that something might be discovered to prove him innocent.

The net result had been that, while Larry's record as a railroad man had won her father's frank admiration—for not a man among the railroaders at Angel but had paid ungrudging tribute to Larry's ability—the evidence against him only stood out the blacker, the more conclusive. Her father had not said so in so many words, but she knew that any leanings toward the belief that Larry was innocent, leanings that she had at first succeeded in instilling him with, were now dissipated.

The pucker on her forehead grew a little deeper, a little more anxious, a little more hopeless. It seemed as tho she had exhausted every means within her power.

She had even, accompanied by her father, gone to see Mason, the paymaster, who had been removed from the hospital to his boarding-house. That had been the day before yesterday. She wished now that she had not gone. It had appeared to act as a sort of final, deciding factor upon her father. Smothered in bandages, the paymaster had jerked himself up in bed, and had shaken his fist in a horrible way, as tho insensate fury alone overcame his physical weakness. She could hear the man scream out in his rage now:

"I hope they get him! Look at me! Look at me! D—n him! I hope he spends—I pray to Almighty God that he spends the rest of his life in prison for this!"

And then, too, she had been watched. It had not made any difference, for she had had nothing to conceal. Indeed, if she had not been filled with such wild anxiety, Sheriff Laing's apparently innocent and ingenuous movements would have afforded her amusement and proved a source of intense satisfaction. How little he suspected that she was quite well aware of the motive that kept him in Angel—that she had overheard him in the car that night! She was always running into him at odd and unexpected moments. He had adopted almost a paternal attitude toward her. The bluster of that night on the track was gone. He treated her, when he spoke to her, with the tolerance of a parent toward a stubborn child, whose stubborness, tho a sourse of pain and regret, was, in the ultimate issue, a thing of little account.

Came a grim little smile—and then she shook her head again. She had nothing to warrant her laughing at Sheriff Laing. It was thru no cleverness of her own that she saw thru the man; it was only a fortunate accident that had armed her against him and put her upon her guard.

It had not made any difference—the smile became a little pitiful, a little tremulous—if only, in a way, it had! Sheriff Laing was waiting, watching, expecting her to make some move that would put Larry in his power—but there had been no move to make! She had heard nothing from Larry. She only knew that, from the absence of news to the contrary, he could not have been captured. Where he was, how he was, she did not know—and on that score, too, her anxiety had increased.

As for Mr. Felton, she had seen little of him. It was nearing the first of the month, the general payday of the entire division, and, his obligations as a host on behalf of the railroad temporarily suspended while the car remained at Angel, he had stepped into the breach, as it were, and had assumed the paymaster's duties over in the latter's office.

It had all seemed so unnatural these three days, so full of suspense, as tho she were existing in the face of some threatening, impending disaster that was always imminent, yet never reached its climax; full of fear that hourly she would hear of Larry's capture, and full of hope, too, that something, something would transpire that would crown her efforts with some practical, tangible reward. And neither one nor the other had happened.

SUDDENLY she felt the blood mounting to her cheeks. Was there something more than gratitude, than a loyalty which demanded every return she could make for service rendered—was there something more than that which inspired her to fight on, that in spite of everything kept her faith in the innocence of this man, branded a criminal, hunted by the law, as fresh and unclouded as it had been that night when he had lain there helpless, wounded, and she had listened to his story? Did she care? Did it mean that—this belief and faith of hers that would have made her proud to stand beside him and in the face of every one declare him innocent? She did not know. It frightened her a little. Suppose—suppose that it were so, what could the future hold?

She had failed signally, utterly to shake by a single link the chain of evidence against him. She did not know. She had always dreamed that love was like the growth of a rare and beautiful plant, long nurtured in the garden of the soul before it found its fulness of expression when the opening bud should burst into glad and radiant blossom. It was only for a few hours, and only for a few moments during those hours, that she had ever seen or been with this man—and yet into those moments had been crowded thoughts and acts and the intimate comradeship of a common peril that was experienced in the whole lifetime of but few.

Tommaso wriggled uncomfortably in his chair. A footstep sounded coming along the corridor from the forward end of the car.

Mera looked up as Sam, the porter, who, having been granted a half-holiday, had been away from the car since luncheon, entered the compartment.

"Well, Sam?" she inquired. "What is it?"

"I—I'd just done lak to speak to yo'

HOW MANY POUNDS WOULD YOU LIKE TO GAIN IN A WEEK?

If you are thin and want to gain weight, weak and want to be strong, I will send you a sample of famous Alexander Vitamines absolutely Free. No money, just name and address for sample. Alexander Laboratories, 1216 Gateway Station, Kansas City, Mo.—Adv.

* * *

LEG SORES

The Bayles Distributing Co., 1856 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo., will mail Free Sample of ANTI-FLAMMA, a Soothing Anti-septic Poultice that draws out the poisons, stops the itching around sores and Heals While You Work. Write today describing case.—Adv.

* * *

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Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa. —Adv.

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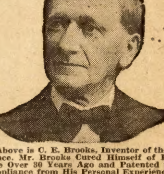

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foh a moment, missy"—there was portentous gravity in Sam's voice.

"Yes, of course," she acquiesced. "I am listening, Sam."

Sam's eyes roved significantly in Tommaso's direction.

"I'd done lak to speak to yo' in private, missy."

Mera sat up in her chair.

"In private! Why—" she glanced at Sam. The man seemed strangely excited, and ludicrously bubbling over with importance and secrecy. "Tommaso," she said, smiling, "go into the smoking-room for a moment." And then, as the boy obeyed: "Well, Sam?"

"No," she answered, half perplexed, half amused. "There is no one here except Johnson, and he is cooking dinner. What is the matter, Sam?"

"Ain't nuffin' de matter"—Sam began to fumble in his inside pocket. "I'se just got a letter foh yo', dat's all."

"A letter!" she exclaimed quickly. "Where did you get it?"

"Da—da-da—dat's just what I'se gwine to tell yo'," stammered Sam excitedly, rolling his eyes. "I gone got it uptown in de most mysterious manner. I was walkin' along just payin' no attention to no one, just mindin' mah own affairs, an' suddenly I hears a voice right in mah ear. 'Heah, you d—n niggar,' says the voice, 'come heah a minute, an' come quick!'

"I looked around an' dere wasn't no one to be seen but a big, f'rocious man eyein' me from just inside a little lane off de main street. I didn't lak de looks ob dat man—no suh!—an' I just naturally hesitates. An' den he says, 'Come heah!'

"Yassum, dat's what he done say, an' de grip he gave mah arm 'most broke it. I'se ain't said a thing, missy, not to a soul, an' I just naturally ain't gwine to. No, suh!" Sam glanced all round the car again, and furtively produced an envelope from his pocket. "Dis heah's de letter, missy."

She took it from him, opened it hurriedly, read it once—and then read it over again.

> When you get this, walk down the track around the curve by the first butte.
>
> THE MAN WITH THE BUCKBOARD.

A further generous part appears next week in the Ledger. You make no mistake in reading the Ledger. Good stories take us out of our lives, which may be more or less humdrum, and carry us into the excitement and thrills of the life we might have led. Part VIII. next week.

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Information-- The rate for one insertion in The Saturday Blade and one insertion in the Chicago Ledger is 35 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next.

W. D. BOYCE CO., Publisher, 500-514 N. Dearborn St., CHICAGO.

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AGENTS—QUALITY SHOES, QUICK SELLers. Big commissions, immediate returns! Independent business! Repeat orders. Experience unnecessary. Write full particulars. Tanners Shoe, 2005 C St., Boston.

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GET INTO THE TAILORING GAME—ONE of the most profitable of all lines in the selling field. Experience isn't necessary, and spare time will do. We teach you how to sell our line, and supply you with everything necessary to go out and make from $10 to $20 a day from the very first day. Our selling outfit is the finest ever gotten together and shows almost 150 large samples of finest quality woolens. You do not delivering with our line. You just write your orders. We do the rest. Your profits run big and you get them cash with order. If you want to get into this most profitable business, write us quick. Address Dept. 225, Goodwear Chicago, Inc., Chicago, Ill.

AGENTS: $11.80 DAILY IN ADVANCE (send for sworn proof) introducing new insured hosiery—47 styles—35 colors—guaranteed seven months. Fall line now ready. No capital or experience required. You simply take orders. We deliver and collect (or you can deliver, suit yourself). Credit given. Pay you daily. Monthly bonus besides. We furnish samples; spare time will do. Macochee Textile Company, File 90081, Cincinnati, Ohio.

AGENTS, $20 TO $40 WEEKLY SPARE TIME appointing newsdealers, local agents to handle The Saturday Blade and Illustrated Story Weekly. Takes only few minutes to sign one dealer, each locality, for trial order. Clean, dignified proposition, liberal payment. Write, stating territory covered, to Dealer Dept. 40, W. D. Boyce Co., 509 N. Dearborn St., Chicago.

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YOU CAN MAKE $25.00 DAILY TAKING orders for new special made "Consumers All-Weather Coats" at factory price, special sample $2.95. Write immediately. Outfit free. Consumers Manufacturing. 724 Roosevelt, Chicago.

NEW INVENTION. CLEANS WHOLE house from cellar to attic, inside and out. All complete only $2.85. Over 100% profit. Write O. P. Morgan, Mgr., 221 Grimes St., Fairfield, Iowa.

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AGENTS: NEW PATENT FIBRE HOUSE broom sells like hot cakes. Free sample offer. National Fibre Broom Co., St. Louis, Mo.

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$$$ FOR IDEAS. PHOTOPLAY PLOTS accepted, any form, revised, published, copyrighted, sold; advice free. Universal Scenario Corporation, 239 Security Bldg., Santa Monica and Western Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

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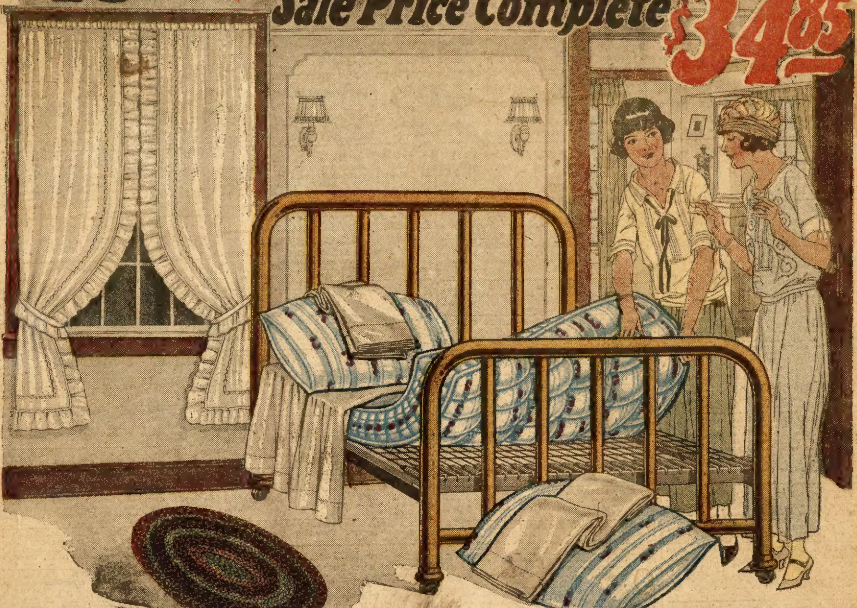

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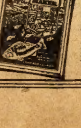

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